ACROSS / A16

Aurora raid yields P4 billion worth of 'shabu'

METRO / A19

Murder charges slapped vs Jaylo, 5 ex-PDEA men

METRO / A20

LRT cuts short operations for holidays

WORLD / A21

China slams UK's claim it 'hijacked' climate talks

So what if GMA is in HK while Mayon burns

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is vacationing in Hong Kong as residents of Albay province flee the expected eruption of Mayon Volcano?

Gary Olivar, the President's deputy spokesperson, sees no problem.

Ms Arroyo had earlier skipped a crucial, make-or-break session at the United Nations' climate change summit in Copenhagen, supposedly to attend to the

SOWHAT A11

Morse Code still dashing through the Cordillera

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THERE IS no mountain high enough to block a Christmas greeting because highland communities that have no mobile telephone

MORSE A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, December 23, 2009 ★★ 9 sections / Vol. 25 / No. 15 P18

SC okays 16 new cities

'Hazardous eruption . . . can happen today or . . .'

By Ray M. Mascl
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—THEY MAY HAVE already moved out of harm's way, but they still keep going back to their homes in Mayon Volcano's danger zones despite government warnings of a major eruption any day now.

The defiant evacuees check on their property, inspect their animals, do laundry, take a bath and attend to other personal needs, or gather firewood, according to Josie Perna, 43, whose family is staying at San Roque Elementary School here.

HELMSMAN/A6

OUT OF DANGER A child is lifted onto a truck as remaining residents are evacuated from a village in Guinobatan, Albay, on Monday. Soldiers and policemen have intensified a round-the-clock ban on residents within the 6.5-kilometer danger zone.

Tribunal reverses earlier decision

By Norman Bordadora

THE SUPREME COURT YESterday declared as valid and constitutional 16 republic acts that converted 16 municipalities into cities while exempting them from a law that requires towns to have an income of P100 million yearly to vie for cityhood.

In an en banc session, the high tribunal voted 6-4 to grant the second motion for reconsideration filed by the towns that lose their city status because of the court's decision on Nov. 18, 2008, that found their "cityhood laws" unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court, with a deadlocked vote of six upvotes, upheld on April 28, 2009, the nullification of the 16 laws because of a common provision exempting them from the annual-income requirement as it supposedly violated the equal-protection clause.

The tribunal said in its April ruling that all issues in the motion for reconsideration had already been resolved when it rendered its November 2008 decision.

In a decision penned by Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco, the Supreme Court ruled that a deadlocked vote did not reflect the majority of the tribunal members and went on to decide that there was no violation of the equal protection clause in the cityhood laws.

SC APPROVES A2

PNP still looking for place big enough for 700 suspects

By Norman Bordadora, Christine O. Avendaño and Jeannette I. Andrade

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE has not found a place large enough to accommodate up to 700 people facing preliminary investigation for multiple murder and rebellion in last month's massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao.

The census will include detention quarters for the suspects led by the politically influential Ampatuan clan who helped President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies win in the 2004 and 2007 elections, according to Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera.

Almost 700 people are facing charges of rebellion and at least 100 of them are also accused in the massacre.

"The PNP is securing for a bigger venue ... not just for the hearings but also for incarceration," Devanadera told reporters.

Devanadera said that the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame and the Department of Justice (DOJ) compound and the National Bureau of Investigation jail lacked the required facilities.

She said the DOJ and the PNP were looking at the PNP facilities in Camp Regong Diwa in Taguig and the PNP Special Action Force camp in Sto. Tomas, Laguna.

About 30 respondents—including

PNP STILL A8

Guardian Angels spread joy, give toys to poor kids

By Schutzi Quedala
Inquirer Research

TEN-YEAR-OLD PRINCESS Deompo has only one wish for Christmas—a toy.

"I've never owned a toy but I've always wanted one. I know that if I continue being a good girl, my wish would come true," the little girl said in Pilipino.

She grew up in Bataan, Toledo, where toys are a luxury for

when the Guardian Angels of America Foundation (GAAF) gave her a small, pink teddy bear, Orampo gushed: "It's perfect!"

GAAF is a nongovernmental organization that solicits toys from Filipino-Americans in the United States and ships them to poor and sick children in the Philippines.

In the last seven years, GAAF

GUARDIANS A10

WIGGLY DO A SANTA CLAUS Lui Herrera, founder of Guardian Angels of America Foundation (GAAF), distributes toys to children from Tondo and Victoria Foundation during the Inquirer Road Along on Dec. 12.

Comelec backs law for early ARMM election

By Kristine L. Alave

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (Comelec) in an en banc resolution yesterday urged Congress to fast-track a law that would allow residents in the restive Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to vote ahead of the May 10 balloting.

"The commission resolved ... to urge both houses of Congress to immediately pass the early voting bills, provided that

COMELEC A4

Noynoy keeps big lead in SWS survey over Manny, Erap

NEARLY FIVE IN 10 ADULT FILIPINOS would vote for Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III if the presidential election scheduled in May were held early this month, according to the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey.

The survey, conducted from Dec. 5 to 10 and whose results were released yesterday, also found Aquino's running mate, Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II, leading in the vice presidential race.

From a list of 11 presidential aspirants, 46 percent of the 2,100 respondents chose Aquino, according to SWS. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points.

A Pulse Asia survey of 1,800 adults nationwide from Dec. 8 to 10 found that 48 percent would vote for Aquino if elections were held at the time.

With the survey's margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points, Aquino's rating was virtually the same as the 46 percent he got in a similar Pulse Asia survey in October.

In the SWS survey, Sen. Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. came in a far second with 27 percent, followed by former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada with 16 percent close.

Five percent chose former Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro.

Bro. Eddie Villanueva and Sen. Richard Gordon received 1 percent each.

Obtaining less than 1 percent were

NOYNOY A7

SHAKE, RATTLE AND ... Ilocos Norte Rep. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. greets Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, who initially appears cool to the son of the late dictator who clapped him in jail where he was repeatedly tortured during martial law. The two men, along with Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza (at right), are guest senatorial candidates of the Nacionalista Party under standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second
FRONTPAGE

Publication info: Tel: (02) 8896-2000 to 4001 | Website: www.inquirer.net/opinion | E-mail: pi_view@inquirer.com.ph

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Miriam: So shoot me

Senator bares death threat, says Cabinet man is after her

By Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR-SANTIAGO YESTERDAY ACcused a "notorious Cabinet member" of being behind the death threat and the disqualification case filed against her.

Santiago said she would identify the Cabinet member when sessions resume next month.

"With my parliamentary immunity, media can then freely identify him without having libel charges," Santiago said in a statement.

Congress is now on recess for the holidays and will resume its session on Jan. 18.

In a statement, Santiago's office said the senator personally received the death threat last Monday as the same time her staff got a copy of the "unfortunate" petition seeking to disqualify her from next year's senatorial race.

Santiago is running for reelection and is being carried by different political parties that included the Nacionalista Party, Lakas-Kampi and the Pwersang Masang Pilipino.

The senator said a man called at her Quezon City residence and told her to "stop speaking or talks, or else something dire would happen to me."

"No threat me. I don't scare easy. If the Cabinet member is serious, he should hire physical assassins to shoot me on a platform stage. That way, the public will see how vicious he is," she said.

Santiago said the death (hirit) and disqualification case were made on the same day the latest survey results of Pulse Asia showed she was among the top four senatorial candidates that voters prefer.

"This is the handiwork of a 0% firm hired by the cabinet member to avenge himself against my public hearings, which showed he has stolen billions from public funds. The timing alone is meant to conserve on just before Christmas," said Santiago who

SANTIAGO

threatened to expose the Cabinet member "even more to public ridicule during her speeches."

She noted that when she attended her first political rally with the 0% she mentioned the corruption scandals she investigated where she said the Cabinet member was involved. These scandals include the fraud scandals who were stopped early this year in Bicutan for carrying a huge amount of undeclared euro money; TF Informicide by candidates in the 2010 polls and the mal-remission of billions of pesos in road user's tax.

Santiago said she would seek the disbarment before the Supreme Court against the person who filed the disqualification case against her as well as his lawyer petitioner and his lawyer "on grounds of deceit, malpractice, violation of the lawyer's oath and other unethical conduct."

She was particularly irked by the "dirty low blow" dealt by the petitioner who accused her of being behind the death of his son in 2003. The petition said Santiago lost her mother not her son because as was reported.

"This is not an ordinary senate campaign. It is political warfare, intended to make me rewind my statement against," she said.

Still, she expressed confidence the Commission on Elections will dismiss the case filed against her because the deadline for filing such cases was last Dec. 6.

Among the alleged grounds cited by the petitioner for seeking Santiago's disqualification from running in the senate race was that she was insane.

GMA, Erap on same boat

By Kristine L. Alave

PRESIDENT ARROYO AND former President Joseph Estrada have found themselves on the same side, for once.

Both were named in a disqualification case filed by erstwhile presidential candidate Ely Pamatong in the Commission on Elections.

Pamatong himself was disqualified by the Comelec for being a "nuisance candidate" who lacked the means to mount a countrywide campaign.

Pamatong told the Comelec that both Ms Arroyo and Estrada could not stand by election in May 2010 due to circumstances.

Estrada was toppled from the presidency in 2001 due to corruption after serving less than three years of a six-year term. Ms Arroyo, the vice president then, took over from him.

Ms Arroyo, who is at the end of her term, is eyeing a congressional run in the second district of Pampanga, while Estrada is aiming to reclaim the post he once concurrently lost.

'Let people decide'

The lawyers of both, however, dropped off the disqualification complaint at yesterday's hearing at the Comelec in Intramuros, Manila.

Estrada attended the hearing which included two other disqualification cases filed against him with the Comelec.

He said he was confident the complaints would be thrown out.

Aside from Pamatong, Emilio Fernando and Elmer Leo Estrada filed disqualification cases against Estrada.

Fernando said Estrada should be declared a "nuisance candidate" and excluded from the balloting because he was covered by the constitutional ban on presidents running for the office's duration.

Estrada branded the charges against him as "baseless."

"The ban is only for incumbent presidents who served the complete six years. I only served for two and a half years, therefore, I am qualified to run," he said.

President Arroyo, on the other hand, was represented by her lawyer, Romulo Macalintal.

In an interview, Macalintal said Ms Arroyo was harassed by Pamatong's complaint which charged that her run for Congress was unconstitutional.

"The President just smiled ... but since we were directed by the Comelec to answer the petition, we filed our answer," Macalintal said.

Use of media as combat cover hit

LUCENA CITY—THE COMMANDER of the Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar here urged media groups to condemn the communist-led New People's Army rebels who masqueraded as journalists when they attacked the San Narciso, Quezon police station last Sunday.

"The media groups in the country should condemn these terrorists. Using as members of the media to deceive the police, the NPA abused the constitutionally sacred integrity of the media profession to advance their own evil schemes," Lt. Gen. Roland Detabali said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

Detabali was in San Narciso town along with Chief Supt. Federico Dulad, Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) regional police director, conducting a personal assessment of the situation.

Renee Bongca, president of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), has appealed to all combatants in armed conflicts to "respect the neutrality of the media."

"Rebels posing as journalists, especially in military operations, put to risk media men who may be covering or reporting on these events," Bongca said in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

The NUJP head also appealed to state security forces not to use the NPA attack in San Narciso police station "as an excuse to prevent journalists from doing their jobs."

Paul Lt. Colonel Frank Sayson, chief of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division-Public Affairs Office based in Tanay, Rizal, also said the communist guerrillas denounced the "surveillance of the Christmas season."

He said the attack was a "desperate move" of the NPA as proper itself as a force to reckon with.

Police station looted

"The NPA looted the police station of their latest anti-personnel equipment. They are criminals," Sayson added.

On Sunday afternoon, a band of NPA rebels armed with high-powered firearms raided the San Narciso police station and carried away five M-16 rifles, four shotguns, four 9mm pistols, .38-cal. revolver, a handheld communications and cash money.

A police report said five NPA "sympathizers" (female members) posed as news reporters, entered the police station and talked with the desk officer. The rest of the communist rebels then rushed in and subdued the eight policemen on duty.

He said there were about 24 attackers, not 7-8 or 10 as earlier reported.

According to Supt. Elmer Francis Sarsoza, Quezon police chief, the rebels' disguise was "convincing," adding that only when they were able to really penetrate the station.

Despite the attack, Detabali said the military would still recommend the holding of the traditional recess in observance of the Yuletide season. —Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

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Vigils to mark first month of Maguindanao massacre

DAVAO CITY—TODAY MARKS THE first month of the Maguindanao massacre, in which at least 57 civilians, 30 of them journalists, met a violent death on a hill in Ampatuan town in Maguindanao.

Today fellow journalists belonging to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines and the News 21 Movement will hold simultaneous prayer vigils in Metro Manila and Davao, General Santos and other cities in the Visayas and Mindanao to remember their fallen comrades and renew their pledge to see the case through to the end.

The Maguindanao massacre made headlines around the world. It pitted the Ampatuan family against the Mangudadatu clan, both prominent and powerful political families.

The main suspect in the massacre, then Unday Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr., now sits in the National Bureau of Investigation jail in Manila.

His father, Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr., brother, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan, and other relatives are in detention in General Santos City. All are believed to have planned and executed the massacre of the Mangudadatu clan, two prominent women lawyers, the journalists and innocent persons who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Ampatuans were on their way to the Commission on Elections office in Shariff Aguak in file the certificate of candidacy (CoC) for Maguindanao governor of Buluan town Mayor Ismael Mangudadatu. This would have pitted Mangudadatu against Andal Jr.

It was thought that if Gensan Mangudadatu, wife of Esmael, were to file his CoC for him as his is would come to the group because women are not included in the rights of succession. The journalists were along to cover the CoC filing as added insurance against any violence.

Andal Jr. has undergone a preliminary investigation at the Department of Justice in Manila.

On his way back to the NBI jail, Andal Jr. was set upon by media men covering the event. He was kicked, slapped and hit in the face with a heavy camera.

Judge Jocelyn Solis Reyes of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court on Monday set Andal Jr.'s trial for January. —Jeffrey M. Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

Filipino casualty of Libya sinking named

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN Affairs yesterday identified the Filipino casualty in the sinking of the Duty F II off the coast of Tripoli, Libya last Dec. 17 as Alex Crisostomo, the cargo ship's 3rd engineer.

Still missing were seven other Filipino seamen identified as Manuel Llanos, Leonardo Hungalan, Feller Edgar, Marcial Bordas Jr., Benedicto Cruz, Bernie Librada and Elmer Sisit. They were among the 21 Filipino seafarers of the ship.

The Panamanian-flagged Duty F II left the Uruguay capital of Montevideo Nov. 29 and was en route to the Syrian port of Tartus, north of Tripoli, with a consignment of 10,000 sheep and 18,000 cattle when it was hit by a night storm.

The ship's operator, Agencia Sebastely said the ship had 162 passengers and crew; many of them Pakistanis and Filipinos.

The Philippine Embassy in Beirut said it had dispatched welfare officers to Tripoli to assist the seafarers.

Fourteen Filipino seafarers were rescued and are now housed in Tripoli. They were identified as Jessie Jr., now sits in the National Bureau of Investigation jail in Manila.

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Fourteen Filipino seafarers were rescued and are now housed in Tripoli. They were identified as Jessie

HOMEWARD BOUND Overseas Filipino workers and "balikbayan" with children reunite at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to spend Christmas in the country with their families. At right, arriving passengers wait for their luggage at the carousel. Thousands of Filipinos have been arriving in droves daily to coincide Christmas Day and New Year. The Philippines, being a predominantly Catholic country, has one of the longest "Yuletide breaks in the world. NOEL CELIS/AFP

HBW 2000 BALLPEN

NUISANCE CANDIDATE

Mark Jimenez contests delisting

BUSINESSMAN MARK JIMENEZ has protested his exclusion from the list of the presidential candidates in the 2010 elections, despite his claimed financial capability to mount a nationwide campaign.

In a filing with the Commission on Elections on Monday, Jimenez—Mario Crespo in real life—asked the constitutional guarantee that every citizen has the right to vote and be voted on in an election.

As such, the electorate should be given the choice through a free market of candidates, while candidates should be allowed to freely express their views and credentials before the voters, he said.

"The role of the Commission on Elections in this integral part of democracy is to ensure that electors are able to exercise the franchise intelligently and that candidates are able to have a fair opportunity to canvass the voting public," Jimenez said.

Without basis

"In constitutional duty, therefore, is to see the emergence of the most to ensure the widest possible set of choices among electors and a reputable environment for expression among candidates," he added.

In his petition, Jimenez said the Comelec failed to discharge its constitutional duty when it decided to exclude him from participating as a presidential candidate "without sufficient basis."

Jimenez said he met all the constitutional requirements for a presidential candidate—he is a natural-born Filipino, at least 40 years old, and has been a resident of the Philippines for at least 10 years.

Jimenez also said that based on a survey conducted by Pulse Asia in 2006, he was a nationally recognized public figure with an "awareness rating" of 93 percent.

He said that in 2006, he was more recognizable than most public officials at the time like Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, Education Secretary Fe Hidalgo, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Interior Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz.

Wealthiest

Jimenez said that he was also a nationally recognized philanthropist whose activities have reached the local private sector and have led to respect on international forum. These activities have been widely covered by the press, he added.

Most of all, Jimenez stressed that he has the money to finance a national campaign, having been adjudged the wealthiest member of Congress when he was a congressman, and an internationally recognized businessman "who was even allowed to visit and stay at the White House several times."

Membership in a political party was not a qualification for running for public office, he said.

Human rights

The capacity to wage a nationwide campaign is difficult to test given the state of technology today which allows a candidate to be virtually present in many places simultaneously, he added.

Jimenez is running on a platform called "Total Human Rights Now!" claiming to use his personal experience as a victim of human rights violations, when he was extradited to the United States in 2002 to face mail fraud, tax evasion and other charges.

Jimenez claimed to have filed a case against the Philippine government with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland. Cynthia D. Balana

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Quake jolts Luzon

A MODERATE 5.4 MAGNITUDE quake hit Luzon early Tuesday, the US Geological Survey said, but there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage.

The quake struck at 3:50 a.m. (4:50 p.m. Monday, Eastern) at 135 kilometers northeast of Baguio City, at a depth of 10 kilometers.

The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center did not issue any tsunami warning.

On Monday, a quake measuring 6.0 struck 229 kilometers southeast of General Santos City.

It had a magnitude of 6.7 and a depth of 139.2 kilometers.

This area of southern Mindanao and Indonesia has been seismically active in the past few months, with several quakes occurring last Monday, Thursday and Wednesday.

The Philippines lies in a region called the Pacific Ring of Fire that is characterized by a high degree of volcanic and seismic activity. Alexis Pajes, AFP

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SC approves 16 new cities, overturns self

From page A1

The Supreme Court, then, reversed the validity of the city-hood laws that restored the cities out of the 16 towns. (See table on this page.)

Seeking cityhood before 2001

The high court said all 16 municipalities had been seeking cityhood—along with 33 other towns that eventually became cities—even before the passage of Republic Act No. 9009 in June 2001.

RA 9009 amended the local Government Code to raise the income requirement for towns to become cities from P20 million to P100 million.

The tribunal said the income-hike rule of then President Joseph Estrada to Congress in 2000 came in the way of the passage of the city-hood laws covering the respondent municipalities.

"Respondent municipalities and the 33 other cities, which had already been elevated to city status, were all found to be qualified under the old Section 450 of the Local Government Code of 1991 during the 11th Congress," the Supreme Court said.

"As such, both respondent LGUs [local government units] and the 33 other former municipalities are under like circumstances and conditions. There is, thus, no rhyme or reason why an exemption from the P100-million requirement cannot be given to the respondent LGUs," the tribunal added.

Qualified for exemption

The Supreme Court, however, clarified that only LGUs with pending cityhood applications before the passage of RA 9009 would qualify for exemption from the stringent income requirement.

"It is hard to imagine, however, if there are still municipalities were there belonging to one and in the same class as the 16 respondent LGUs. Municipalities that cannot claim to belong to the same class as the 16 cities next will go to the cityhood laws," the tribunal said.

"The former have to comply with the P100-million income requirement imposed by RA 9009," it said.

League of cities

The League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), represented by its president, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, questioned the cityhood laws.

In cited the violation of the equal-protection clause allegedly posed by the common provision of exempting the 16 towns from the higher income requirement.

The league also expressed fear that the existing cities would suffer a reduced share in the internal revenue allotment (IRA) because of the creation of additional cities personally with low income.

The IRA is a subsidy given by the national government to LGUs.

"In the proceedings at bar, petitioner LCP and the intervenors cannot plausibly invoke the equal-protection clause, precisely because no depreciation of property results by virtue of the creation of the cityhood laws," the Supreme Court said.

Cut in IRA allocation

The tribunal said the LCP claims that the IRA of its member cities would be substantially reduced because of the conversion into cities of the 16 towns would not suffice "as long is within the ambit of constitutional guarantees."

"Indeed it is presumptuous on the part of the LCP member cities to already make a claim on the IRA, as if it were their property, as the IRA is yet to be allocated," the court said.

Sixteen new cities

1. Baybay in Leyte
2. Bogo in Cebu
3. Carbungan in Samar
4. Tandag in Surigao del Sur
5. Borongan in Eastern Samar
6. Tagbilaran in Bohol province
7. Lanuban in Basilan
8. Tabuk in Kalinga
9. Bayugan in Agusan del Sur
10. Malaybalay in Bukidnon
11. Mati in Davao Oriental
12. Cotabato in Maguindanao province
13. Cabadbaran in Agusan del Norte
14. Carigara in Cebu
15. El Salvador in Misamis Oriental
16. Bogo in Cebu

IN THE KNOW

THE NUMBER OF CITIES IN the country has more than doubled from 83 in 1937 to 136 in 2007.

This increase has significantly reduced the share of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) of existing cities.

The IRA is the share of provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays from national tax collections.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said that the existing cities would lose an average of P2 million from their IRA share for every additional new city.

Some reasons have necessitated the increase of the percentage share of the IRA for cities.

Before the recent Supreme Court decision, 32 cities and 61 provinces each had a 23-percent shared in the IRA, while 1,494 municipalities share 34 percent, and 41,000 barangays, 20 percent.

Citing results of his own studies, Negat City Jesse Mayor Robredo said that the provinces' share in the IRA had increased by 182 percent. The municipalities' share by 168 percent, but the cities' share by only 40 percent. Inquirer Research

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Comelec backs bid for early ARMM polls

From page A1

elections will be conducted not later than April 12, 2008, in the ARMM and only for one day," the four-page resolution said.

The Constitution provides that local and national polls should be held on the same date.

Comelec officials said only a new law would enable the poll body to set a date ahead of the scheduled presidential and local elections in the ARMM.

The region is composed of the predominantly Muslim provinces of Basilan (except Isabela City), Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, and Marawi City.

The Comelec said there were three pending bills in Congress seeking to ease election-management problems.

One of the measures, House Bill No. 3447, aims "to uphold the vote of every voter and not disenfranchise the voters due to circumstances obviously based and also is necessary if not totally eliminate electoral violence."

Not a single election untainted

The Comelec has been calling for separate balloting in the ARMM, with a long history of election cheating and violence, in order to accommodate its security and administrative forces there.

The poll was requested following the election-related massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao on Nov. 23, the worst political violence in the country's history.

Recently, lawyer Bhadrudin Limbo, a former justice undersecretary, and Benjamin Catalan filed a petition in the Comelec to set the election in ARMM on April 12 instead of May 10.

"The electoral history of the areas of the ARMM will show that there was not a single election held in the area which was not tainted with irregularities and all forms of poll frauds," they noted in their petition.

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Morse Code still dashing through Cordilleras

From page A1

signals can still be reached by Morse Code.

In this day and age, the Commission on Information and Communication Technology (CICT) in the Cordillera is still operating a telegraph system that serves clients here.

Nothing beats the old technology, according to telegraph operators working at the Baguio City Post Office, never mind that such word transmitted costs a customer P2.40. (Mobile or landline telephone calls cost P1 a minute.)

Customers who use the telegraph to send Christmas greetings use "broken English" to shorten their messages, rather like today's text messages, according to samples obtained by the Inquirer.

Still prolific

Remarkably, the Baguio telegraph station still earns P2,000 a month, said Rosita Bilag, acting chief operator at the CICT.

Bilag said the station's profits used to reach P60,000 a month—until almost every resident in the Cordillera acquired a mobile telephone.

But the highlands are not always hospitable to Internet satellite or cellular phone signals, so the CICT continues to maintain 40 telegraph stations in Benguet, Bugao, Abra and Kalinga, and CICT operator Soledad Damasco.

The telegraph machines were purchased way back in the 1960s but the government has kept them working, Damasco said.

To facilitate communication among those towns when mobile telephones are inaccessible, local officials reach each other by Morse Code using their machines, she said.

According to Damasco, the machines are also where during typhoons, when most wireless phones and facilities fail to operate.

'CW' machines

This Christmas, the telegraph office offers straight holiday message packages.

"This Christmas telegrams are categorized [as] useful telegrams," Damasco said. She said they used to send out telegram cards as their special Christmas message package, except that those had been phased out.

"Our nationals [non Manila people] are one [old technology] and they would laugh. And then they'd ask, 'You still use CW [continuous wave] machines?'" she said.

Continuous wave is the most common medium for transmitting messages in telegraph stations by Morse Code—a mode alphabet composed of dots (dots) and dashes (longer).

The code was named after its inventor, American artist Samuel Morse, who developed the first successful electric telegraph in 1838.

The telegraph offices in the morning town of Bogod in Bontgoc still use a World War II telegraph model called the "straight key" which is known in the United States as J-38.

Morse Code courses

Damasco, a telegraph operator for the past 19 years, said the telegram began to decrease into obscurity in the 1990s because of the mobile phones and the Internet.

But vocational schools continue to keep Morse Code courses alive because the demand for the telegram has not disappeared completely, she said.

"Other operators learn Morse Code from the Internet" or by enrolling in the Telecommunications Training Institutions in Metro Manila City in Metro Manila, Damasco said.

Christmas and codes are also at least, indicating that the postal service remains busy during the Yuletide season. A Baguio hotel-resort has sold 200 yards daily in the run-up to Christmas Day.

PHOTO of an old telegraph

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Comelec to penalize Smartmatic for delays

By Kristine L. Alave

MELO

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS WILL only fine supplier Smartmatic TIM Corp. if it fails to deliver all 82,200 voting and counting machines by end-February next year.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo said the poll body would not penalize its election system supplier for the delay in the delivery of the Precinct Count Optical Scan machines.

The first batch of the poll machines, which will be used in the 2010 automated elections, should have been delivered in November.

"If they did not deliver their commitment for the entire contract, that's where you penalize. It is not per delivery. They know that they will be penalized if they fail to deliver," Melo said.

Smartmatic TIM won the bidding for Comelec's P7.2-billion contract to implement the country's first-ever national automated elections on May 10, 2010. Under the contract, the consortium will be liable for fines if it fails to meet certain goals.

Based on the Comelec calendar, Smartmatic-TIM is expected to complete the delivery of the 82,200 PCOS machines by Feb. 28.

The Comelec chief said they expect 7,200 voting machines to be delivered by next week.

Melo admitted that the heavy cargo traffic during the holiday season has affected the delivery of some 12,000 PCOS machines.

By Jan. 3, Melo said they expect the delivery of 9,000 PCOS and another 30,000 by Jan. 10.

"By the first week of February, it's 100 percent commitment. They will be in Manila for our 80% 20% deadline," he said.

In a recent congressional hearing, Comelec officials admitted they were behind by three months in their preparations for the national and presidential elections.

Attending to the Comelec, the delays were attributed to the initial problems between Smartmatic and TIM regarding their partnership and "unforeseen circumstances" such as the typhoon in Tacloban where the poll machines were originally to be made.

The consortium later transferred the manufacturing site of the machines to Clark. The deal was also questioned in the Supreme Court.

Despite the delays, however, they assured that they were on track for the elections.

Court showdown looms over tax-stamp system

A COURT SHOWDOWN LOOMS BETWEEN lawmakers and the Department of Finance over the government's insistence on taking up a proposal from a Swiss company to implement a tax-stamp system for six products.

Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan said Congress would have no choice but to seek legal action if Finance Secretary Margarito Teves decides to mull a wraps and means committee probe into the P10-billion labeling project of Sicpa Product Security.

Deputy Speaker and Bacoor Rep. Eric Singson chided Teves for his "inappropriate and somewhat unkind" comments challenging separation of powers in the Supreme Court if they want to question the Sicpa project.

"We are just doing our jobs to look into matters that are onerous and detrimental to the government and the public," said Singson.

The committee has insisted that the tax labeling should be classified as a form of taxation, hence would need legislation and not mere executive fiat.

The members said that the cost of the tax stamps should not be added but deducted from the current excise tax rate, which would defeat the BOE purpose of raising new revenues.

Sicpa proposes to use tamper-proof strip stamps, initially on cigarette products, for inventory monitoring and checking tax payments.

Committee members said it would entail additional costs but would not boost tax collection.

Capiznon de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez questioned the haste in implementing the project without a proper bidding. DEC. Calhoun.gan.ir

Fugitive Swede falls

By Jerome Aning

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION, TOGETHER with agents of the Philippine Center for Transnational Crimes, arrested a Swede wanted by authorities in Denmark for an $11-million bank heist.

In a report to Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan, the bureau's Interpol Red Alert Officer Rufus Jr. identified the Swede as 37-year-old Lukas Hasselgren. The suspect was nabbed on Dec. 8 outside his condominium at the Adriatico Place Tower II, along M. Adriatico Street, Ermita, Manila.

Libanan ordered the deportation of the fugitive to Sweden, and then to Denmark to stand trial for his crime.

Citing a report from the Swedish Embassy, Libanan said Hasselgren is suspected of robbing a security cash center in Denmark of more than 60 million Danish crowns (about $11 million or about P520 million) on Aug. 8, 2006.

The Swedish and Danish police have been hunting down Hasselgren since then.

Magnus Swenson, of the Swedish police liaison office in Manila, thanked Libanan for the BI's assistance and swift action in arresting the suspect.

"Let me once again, on behalf of the police in Denmark and Sweden, express my gratitude to you for all the professional assistance extended to our office," Swenson said in a letter to the BI chief.

Libanan said the government would not allow the country to be used as a sanctuary by wanted alien criminals.

Rufus said the creation of the Interpol Unit enabled the BI to establish stronger coordination with its counterparts in the France-based International Crime Police Organization (Interpol) and other law enforcement agencies abroad.

The unit is also responsible for coordinating with the police and intelligence attaches of the different foreign missions stationed in Manila, thus enhancing the agency's capability to go after foreign fugitives hiding in the country, he said.

Manuel Paez Jr., 81

LAWYER MANUEL PAEZ JR. died on Dec. 21 at the age of 81. His body lies at Chapel 20 of the Funeraria de Antonio Arnaiz corner Quezon Avenue until tomorrow. He is survived by his children Ed, Patricia Ann, Victoria and Ramon Ignacio; sons-in-law Jose Carlos Hidalgo and Jesus Ramos; sons-in-law Jose Carlos Hidalgo and grandchildren Virgie, Inga, Adolfito and Isabella.

NO-SHOW AS STATE WITNESS
Tan brother blew it–PCGG

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government (PCGG) may have no other choice but to nominate Lucio Tan, after he failed to appear before the anti-graft agency.

According to PCGG commissioner Ricardo Abcede, Tanenglian has failed to appear to explain to justify his offer to turn state witness against his brother.

"We gave him (his last chance but he did not show up. We'll just have to go with (the opinion of the OIG (Office of the Solicitor General)," Abcede said.

The OIG had endorsed the PCGG to throw out Tanenglian's offer to testify for other the Tanenglian camp wrote to the Sandiganbayan, Muhaylang and the PCGG, the agency decided to hear him out.

"He even asked the Sandiganbayan to compel us to make him a state witness but now, he does not want to appear before us. So, we are wondering why he did not take up that opportunity. Why didn't he show up?" Abcede said.

"How can we make him a state witness if we cannot ask him questions and examine his testimony? How can we determine the value of his testimony if he cannot even enlighten us about it?" he said.

The PCGG is going after the Lucio Tan-owned companies, like Fortune Tobacco, claiming these to be part of the ill-gotten assets of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Abcede earlier since have alleged that the government's reluctance to accept Tanenglian's offer to testify showed that it was favoring Tan. Abcede has denied the allegations.

The OIG told the PCGG in turn in a proposed immunity agreement with Tanenglian in exchange for his testimony because such an agreement would be "grossly disadvantageous" to the government.

"Up to this time, Tanenglian has not given the PCGG any new information that could perhaps further strengthen the republic's case. He merely relies on documents already available to the republic," said Solicitor General and Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera.

Devanadera said there was no certainty that Tanenglian would provide useful information at all despite his commitment to do so since the immunity agreement is executed.

Under the proposed immunity agreement, Tanenglian concedes to the ill-gotten wealth case, Civil Case 0033, against Tan, the Marcos heirs and cronies, by providing information relevant to the case and by making himself available as a state witness.

BRACING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Telcos: Text away, but watch the time

By Paolo G. Montecillo

SORING UNFORESEEN EVENTS, DOE should be able to text and call away on one's mobile phone during the holidays.

That's because local telecommunication firms are gearing up to ensure reliable phone service during the Christmas and New Year's rush.

And to avoid network congestion, the companies strongly suggested that subscribers send their holiday greetings to family and friends before the peak hours on Christmas and New Year's Eve.

"We want subscribers to make their calls before the peak hours so they will not run into traffic," said Globe Telecommunications Inc. regulatory affairs head Froilan Castelo.

Mobile phone users typically send their greetings in the midnight hour approaches on Christmas and New Year's.

The spike in text messages and calls has caused problems in the past due to the limitations of the local mobile networks.

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has said that on regular days, there are two billion text messages sent throughout the country. The number increases by about 50 percent during the holidays.

Castelo said that if subscribers send their texts and make their calls all at the same time, Globe's network may not be able to handle the volume.

"Babagsak ang network (The network will fail)," he said, adding, "We are making this call so that all subscribers will be able to enjoy our services, even during the peak hours."

The company earlier said that it was pouring in telephone infrastructure on "transfix," meaning that there would be no major work done to its network.

Smart Communications Inc., meanwhile, said that despite the networks having improved over the years, a heavy surge in phone activity could still cause problems.

"It's hard to guarantee that there would be no network congestion or drops during the peak season, but there should be no serious congestion issues," said Smart Communications spokesperson Ramon Isberto in a separate interview.

The NTC had issued a memorandum ordering local telecom firms to ensure that their networks would be able to accommodate sending text messages and making calls during the holidays.

"All public telecommunication entities shall ensure that their respective networks and facilities are ready to handle the expected increase in the volume of traffic during the Christmas holidays," the regulator said in the order it issued earlier this month.

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
CORPORATION FINANCE DEPARTMENT

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
METRO MANILA

IN THE MATTER OF

IP E-GAME VENTURES INC.
(Registrant)

REGISTRATION OF SECURITIES

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on November 19, 2009, a sworn statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") for and on behalf of IP E-GAME VENTURES INC. (the "Registrant") for the registration of Thirty Three Million Five Hundred Forty Five Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Four (33,545,554) common shares with a par value of One Peso (P1.00), representing one hundred percent (100%) of its issued and outstanding capital stock.

According to the papers presented, the following persons are the officers/directors of the corporation:

NAME	POSITION
Jaime C. Gonzalez	Chairman of the Board of Directors
Jaime Enrique Y. Gonzalez	Director, Deputy Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer
Juan Kevin G. Bolinao	Director
Steve Tsao	Director
J Samuel A. Soriano	Director
Rene Pavalon	Independent Director
Juan Victor Tanpiengco	Independent Director
Ed Anthony G. Eduria	Chief Operating Officer
Emmanuel F. Salandanan	Chief Finance Officer
Heidi Anne M. Gonzalez	Vice President – Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games
Eduardo C. Pamon	Vice President – Marketing
George J. Reyson	Vice President – Casual Games
Jasmine C. De Leon	Corporate Secretary

Said registration statement and other papers/documents attached thereto are open to inspection for interested parties during business hours, and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise, shall be furnished to every party upon request at such reasonable fees as the Commission may prescribe.

JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 23, 2009
4th Week of Advent
John of Kanty
1st Reading: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24
Gospels Lk 1:57-66

When the time came for Elizabeth, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the merciful Lord had done a wonderful thing for her and they rejoiced with her.

When on the eighth day they came to attend the circumcision of the child, they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." They said to her, "No one in your family has that name", and they asked the father by means of signs for the name he wanted to give. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote on it, "His name is John," and they were very surprised. Immediately Zechariah could speak again and his first words were in praise of God.

A holy fear came on all in the neighborhood, and throughout the hills of Judea the people talked about these events. All who heard of it pondered in their minds and wondered, "What will this child be?" For they understood that the hand of the Lord was with him.

Commentary:

The season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for us, similar to the season of Lent. However, a different emphasis for the season of Advent has unfolded in much of the Church. Nowadays, Advent has come to be celebrated more in terms of expectation or anticipation of the feast of the Nativity and rejoicing, the longing for redemption from the sinfulness and evil of the world, expressed in evil empires and tyrants. In this sense, all creation groans for its redemption, as we witness the evils but so dominates our world.

There will be more triumph. Rooted in the root of the Church year, to remember our sins. So, we celebrate with gladness the great promise in the advent, knowing that there is also a somber tone as the theme of threat is added to the theme of promise. This is reflected in some of the scripture readings for Advent, in which there is a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment awaits. But this is also faithful in the role of the king, who comes to rule, save and judge the world. So, the prayer of Advent remains: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel!

Wet, cold Christmas in forecast

By Alexis Pupa

IT COULD BE A WET AND COLD CHRISTmas this year, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said yesterday.

In a special weather advisory for the Yuletide week from Tuesday to Saturday, the agency said no storms were in sight but the northeast monsoon (Amihan) and the tail-end of a cold front would affect the country, particularly the eastern sections.

"The northeast monsoon, which brings cold air from the Siberian peninsula, will blow towards Luzon and some light rains in some parts of Eastern Luzon and Eastern Visayas," Pagasa said.

On the other hand, the tail-end of a cold front will affect Northern and Eastern Mindanao "bringing widespread rains in those areas" on Wednesday and possibly in the coming days. Pagasa could be overstating rainstorms for the rest of the week.

Pagasa said it expects good weather for the rest of the country but advised the public to prepare for passing light rains, particularly in the early morning hours.

Because of the northeast monsoon, Pagasa added there could be moderate to strong winds over Northern Luzon and Visayas and coastal waters will be moderate to rough. Fishermen are alerted against moderate to high waves.

Mayon evacuees offered free calls

HOMELESS PEOPLE USE TO FLEE THEIR homes because of the impending eruption of Mount Mayon may make free calls courtesy of Smart Communications Inc.

Smart Lifelong Young Bonifacio have been set up in the Gagnoa Central School and Albay Central School, which are now serving as temporary shelters for residents of Barangays Mabinit, Matanag, Bayasan, Bonga and Padang in Legazpi City, Albay.

Another free calls facility has been set up at the San Roque Elementary School in Legazpi in support of the 901st group and relief operations by the evacuees, organized by the Public Affairs Office of the Armed Forces' 9th Infantry Division. Some 950 families have received gift packs.

The promises of free calls or Lifelong Young is part of Smart's disaster response and emergency initiatives under Kabuhlan, its corporate social responsibility and community service program.

Noynoy keeps lead

From page A1

ben. Jamby Madrigal (0.2 percent), Oliver Lozano (0.1 percent), Mario Crespo (0.1 percent), JC de los Reyes (0.1 percent) and Sixto Brillantes (0.05 percent). Four percent of the respondents did not give an answer.

From the list of eight vice presidential hopefuls, 42 percent chose Bonoan, 32 percent named Sen. Loren Legarda, 18 percent went for Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, 2 percent picked Eduardo Manzano, and 2 percent supported former Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando.

Jose Soriano got 0.3 percent and Perfecto Yasay, 0.1 percent. None of the respondents chose Ang Kapatiran candidate Bonifacio Ilagan Jr.

Santiago taps unnatural race

From the list of 10 names shown to the respondents, 55 percent chose Miriam Defensor-Santiago (People's Reform Party) and former Sen. Sergio Osmeña III.

Estrada belittles Aquino lead

Estrada belittled the lead of Aquino in the Pulse Asia survey saying he would be ahead of the other candidates in the coming months.

Estrada, in an interview at the Commission on Elections yesterday, said he was not worried that he ranked third in the Pulse Asia survey trailing Aquino and Villar.

"In the [October] survey, I got 11 percent. Now it's 19 percent. That's an increase of 8 percent. I'm very optimistic," he said.

Asked if he was appreciative of his third place, Estrada said: "Of course not."

"The votes are not yet decided. They are still weighing everything. It is still five months from now," he said.

Makabayan-twits Tabunda

In the House of Representatives, militant lawmakers said Pulse Asia should explain why the ratings of Aquino failed to go up despite the shorter list of contenders for president.

The lawmakers, who make up the Makabayan coalition, also inquired the analysis of a Pulse Asia official that they might have hampered the rise of Villar's ratings in the latest survey showing the voters' preferred president for the May general elections.

Makabayan is supporting Villar. The coalition's senatorial candidates—Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza—are core candidates of Villar's Nacionalista Party.

Villar placed a far second to Aquino in Pulse Asia's latest survey but his ratings showed an increase of 4 percentage points. Villar got 23 percent.

Misreading

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said the analysis of Ana Maria Tabunda, Pulse Asia chief research fellow, on the impact of Sen. Francis Escudero's decision to abandon the presidential race was inaccurate and misleading.

Tabunda on Monday said that Escudero's supporters would have gone to Gloria, the aide said that Villar's ratings might have only increased by 4 points because he supported the candidacy of Ocampo. Biazo said those Mahir Bay Nedlanad Hamza Jr. son of the former Hamza.

"The key question that Pulse Asia failed to address is why is Sen. Noynoy Aquino's ratings unchanged despite this. Escudero's public support for his candidacy. We don't understand why Tabunda is banking on Senator Villar's 4-point increase in his ratings, saying it did not go up as much as it should," Casiño said in a statement.

He noted that Villar's ratings went up even if Escudero was more identified with Ocampo's camp.

Sought for comment, Liberal Party spokesperson Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III said Pulse Asia had explained that Escudero's voters could have transferred to the other candidates.

But Tañada said Escudero had yet to officially endorse any aspiring president. When he finally does this, the ratings may change, he added.

"We will have to wait for his announcement in January. What is clear is that Noynoy's numbers are stable at 45 percent," he said.

Tañada said the Liberal Party was hoping that Escudero would back Aquino and Roxas in May because his platforms and principles were similar to theirs.

No tactical basis

Casiño also said there was no factual basis for Tabunda's statement that the support for the millionaire-couple-theme for a mere 4-point rise in Villar's rating.

He pointed out that when the Pulse Asia survey was conducted early this month, Ocampo and Maza were not with the Nacionalista Party (NP) yet.

In that time, only Biazo was officially a member of the NP's senatorial slate. "Even though the NP was saying that it was leaning two slots open for the leftist lawmakers.

The militant lawmakers formally joined the NP on Dec. 14, after the party broke off its alliance with Manny Villar's Nacionalista Party.

Ocampo and Maza initially announced that they were running as independents before the outset of the NP's pact-tie-up with the Marcos group.

Ocampo and Maza have a voter base of three million, which they expect to increase as the campaign goes underway, according to Casiño. Reports from Elmer Huerera, Inquirer Research; Christine D. Avendaño, Kristine L. Alave and Leila B. Salaverria

PRIZED ENDORSER Nacionalista Party standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar and his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, strike a pose with boxing icon Manny Pacquiao (left) at the Luneta Hotel in Mandaluyong City

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VISA

Behave, reporters covering Ampatuan trial told

By Alcuin Papa

IT WAS NEITHER a threat nor a request, but reporters were told to be civil when they cover suspected mass murderers Datu Andong Ampatuan Jr. at his trial beginning Jan. 9 at Camp Crame.

"This is a police camp," said Chief Supt. Leonardo Espina, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police. "This is not an open area. It's a secured and controlled environment."

He said that the PNP would provide "appropriate and substantial" security to Ampatuan at his trial to be conducted by a Quezon City court inside the camp, as ordered by the Supreme Court.

Angry journalists gasped up an argument on Friday as he was being led out of the Department of Justice following his preliminary investigation on 57 counts of murder in connection with the Nov. 23 massacre in Maguindanao. Dire related story on Page A2.)

Streak by a camera

The weapon of Datu Unsay out-

(Continued on page A2)

forced a cut in the forehead after he was struck by a camera.

The massacre victims included at least 30 media people out to cover the filing of the candidacy for governor of Ampatuan's rival in the May elections.

The incident was the worst single slaughter of media people anywhere in the world, and underlined the Philippines reputation as the most deadly place on earth for journalists after war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan.

All told, 90 journalists have been killed in the Philippines since Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became the President in 2001.

"I am very optimistic that you will be behaving civilly as we are all civil. With you around, we can never go wrong," Espina said during a briefing about arrangements for the Ampatuan trial.

PNP not very civil

In fact, the PNP has not been very civil to reporters.

On Nov. 20, 2007, some 30 media people were arrested, manacled and brought to Camp Bagong Diwa at the close of a daylong siege of the Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati City by rebellious soldiers led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, who had by then surrendered.

The rough treatment of the journalists, who were present without doing their job, was unprecedented and came amid protests at a climate of impunity that had resulted in the killings of scores of journalists. The shootings have remained largely unsolved.

Espina said protest rallies, whether against or in support of Ampatuan, inside Camp Crame would not be allowed. Outside the camp, Espina said rallies would be permitted for as long as organizers observe quietness.

"We always should abide by the law. We permit no rally/ principle because we should abide by the law. If they have permits why not. But inside (the camp), I don't think anyone would be permitted to hold a rally. And we will not permit it, of course, because this is a police camp," Espina said.

Cops say massacre death toll may be higher—62 instead of 57

COTABATO CITY—THE DEATH toll in the Nov. 23 massacre in Maguindanao may be higher—possibly 62 instead of 57, according to police.

Supt. Alex Lorenzo, acting provincial police director, said several individuals had asked for help in burying missing people believed to be among those slaughtered in the convoy of political supporters of a gubernatorial candidate, journalists and motorists who innocently traded behind.

Datu Mogalias, Midland Review bureau chief in Tacurong City, said two of her comrades accompanied the group from Buluan to Sheriff Aguak on that fateful day.

She showed a list of journalists who accompanied the convoy and it included her two colleagues.

"They have not returned since," Mogalias said as she sobbed their names as the other owns at Barangay Salman in the town named after the powerful Ampatuan clan whose members are prime suspects in the massacre.

The slain media had her two remaining colleagues as Jofe Lapuebe and Reynaldo Momay, both Cotabato correspondents of Midland Review, a weekly tabloid based in Tacurong.

"If their claim is confirmed, then the fatalities in the massacre could be 62 because aside from Lapuebe and Momay, there are still being sought by their relatives," Lorenzo told reporters.

"There are still missing persons and we are searching them. I hope they come out if they are alive," he said.

Fifty-seven bodies were recovered by police and the men from the Barangay Salman, Zaldy D. Pernandez, Inquirer Mindanao.

PNP still looking for place big enough for 700 suspects

From page A1

Andal Ampatuan Jr., and mostly policemen and civilian witnesses...appeared before the panel of state prosecutors on Friday.

The DOJ's Sunday session was barely big enough to fit all the respondents and their lawyers inside the venue, except for a camera crew that broadcast the proceedings live, members of the media were kept outside.

Accident or deliberate

Angry journalists reasoned on Ampatuan as he was being led out of the building. He suffered a cut in the forehead from a wayward camera.

"Whether on purpose or inadvertent, this kind of incident shouldn't happen again," Fernandez said.

The incident prompted Ampatuan's lawyers Raphid Ramos, to file a motion in court to cite in contempt justice officials and NBI agents entrusted with securing the suspect.

Ramos said there was no compelling reason for the accused to appear in the preliminary investigation.

However, Sevanzetes pointed out that Section had not included Ampatuan in his request for waiver of appearance of the accused members of his family.

Prosecutors have set a Dec. 28 hearing for the multiple murder and for the rebellion charges in the morning and in the afternoon at the justice department.

Fernandez said in jest that with almost 500 respondents, reporters may have to cover the court on close-circuit TV a block away on Taft Avenue.

Suggestion that Ampatuan be detained at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig following his attack at the DOJ raised questions from Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday.

High risk area

"We know the area is a high risk one. So if they're after the safety of Ampatuan and just want to make sure that he is in jail, then he is safer where he is right now," Cayetano told reporters.

Cayetano, who is from Taguig, recalled the aborted escape attempt of some members of the Abu Sayyaf in March 2005 that left 22 detainees dead.

He said he could not understand why the police camp seemed to have become a dumping ground for "high risk" detainees.

That was why Cayetano said he hosted the proposed "suspicious." He noted that the Supreme Court had directed another Quezon City court handling the Ampatuan case hold hearings at Camp Crame.

Still spokesperson Sec. Diaz said that agrees securing Ampatuan would not have a holiday break. He said some 200 agents, assisted by the Manila police headquarters, on a red alert status had been deployed to provide Ampatuan security for 24 hours.

No break for security

"They will be on 24-hour mission duty at the NBI and the Crime and the New York," he said.

Diaz explained that the security arrangements were being made amid concerns that his followers would attempt to get him out of the NBI detention. There were also reports that families of the victims planned to quarantine Ampatuan, he said.

"We are taking those considerations seriously that is why we are putting in place those security measures," Diaz stressed.

'Hazardous eruption . . . can happen today or in next few days'

From page A1

The school provides shelter to 253 families or 1,140 people from Barangay Matinal, but it has only two functioning toilets, Perez said. "Some of us would wake up as early as 1 a.m. so we would be first in the long queues," she said.

Bulletins have almost reached their target of relocating 40,366 people or 9,441 families from 31 villages living in the 6-8 kilometer radius "danger zone" from the volcano's crater. The residents are now occupying 26 schools, gymnasiums and other emergency centers in and around the city.

"Hazardous eruption . . . can happen today or in the next few days," said chief state volcanologist Renato Solidum, adding that an eruption also may not happen. "Nobody has a 100 percent accuracy."

Mayon's alert level has been raised to one step below a hazardous eruption. The only higher level is when a major eruption is in progress.

Brighter glow

Low clouds obscured visibility of the upper and middle slopes of the volcano's 2,460-meter Mayon, thwarting state rescue forces and rice patrollers in coastal Albay province.

But an intensified crater glow and rising sulfurdioxide were confirmed by a dense cloud bank on Monday night, said Ed Laguerta, resident volcanologist of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Intermittent booming and rumbling sounds were still heard over the past 24-hour observation, with red hot lava continuously flowing down the Bonga-Bonyan, Miisi and Lidong gullies. The lava front has reached about 3 km from the summit along the Bonga-Bonyan gully.

1,366 quakes in last 24 hours

Solidum said his team recorded 1,366 volcanic quakes in the last 24 hours, down from nearly 2,000 the previous day. He said that while the quakes were strong they were large.

The emission of sulfur dioxide—an indication of magma rising inside the volcano—was measured at 6,938 tons per day, slightly less than 7,000 tons on Tuesday, but still very high. Solidum said. Normal gas emission is 500 tons per day.

Professionally Mayon Volcano is already erupting because lava has oozed out," said Elsbar Laphtes, professor of geological studies at the University of the Philippines.

A bigger, explosive eruption is still possible but hard to predict, he said.

Solidum said "the main problem of the eruption (has) a distance is the lava ash which is the danger posed by the molten of rock fragments from the lava flow."

"It's not very thick...just a few millimetres of ash but that is the most dangerous part because it is very fine ash," he said in a television interview.

Respiratory problems

Health officials warned the fine particles could cause respiratory problems or skin diseases, and could even affect the thousands of people evacuated at the evacuation centers.

Some of almost 2,000 evacuating farmers and their families living on the edge of the northern area have already evacuated their homes three times, but keep on returning to check on their livestock and vegetable farms, Rikki Nichol, a disaster management official, said.

"The probability of renewal in an eruption is now if you're in the danger area. The radius is obviously distance," Gov. Joey Salceda said.

'Open cities'

Salceda and the local disaster coordinating councils had been instructed to promptly respond to the needs of the evacuees to prevent them from returning to their homes.

The Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) has declared all local government units with existing evacuation centers as open cities for residents living within the danger zones.

"This also means that incoming donations from private entities or international to local non-governmental organizations will have to go directly to the local government units and they do not need to coordinate with the PDCC," Salceda said.

They must, however, coordinate with the local clusters, composed of water sanitation, psychosocial and health groups under the Albay Health and Emergency Management (Albem) Teams, that are deployed round-the-clock at the evacuation centers.

Incentive to stay

Salceda said the provincial government had committed 5 kilos of rice daily for every family as an incentive for them not to leave the shelters as part of efforts to avoid a socio-calamity goal in the province.

Olivia Ordiz, 48, an evacuee from Barangay Bonyan, said her family had been receiving as much as 6.5 kilos of rice, as well as canned goods, medicine, and bottled and baste spices.

Another evacuee, Bernardita Perez, 70, said she and other family members no longer needed to return to their homes to get drinking water and firewood.

"We stay here as the free supply of drinking water and food are now regularly coming," she said.

"Now that the evacuees have been transferred to their sites, we have already put the premises under a state of 'evacuee,'" Salceda said.

The mount that donors can come in to their choice of recipient area because the clearer approach had been put to place.

The United Nations on Tuesday prepositioned help and stockpiles of supplies for the evacuees.

In a statement posted on its website, the United Nations said that its humanitarian officials were working with Philippine authorities to prepare contingency measures and protect the evacuees.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said it had helped every say an assessment last month in Albay and was working with officials from the National Disaster Coordinating Council and the regional government.

The UN Children's Fund and the World Food Program every to working with local officials to provide targeted assistance to those in need since the volcano erupts. With reports from Cynthia D. Balana and Alcuin Papa in Manila, AP and AFP

HIGHER, STRONGER Mayon Volcano spews ash some in a mild eruption viewed from Legazpi City on Tuesday. Almost all of the 47,000 residents living on the slopes of the rumbling volcano have been moved to emergency shelters.

DARK DECEMBER Mayon Volcano evacuees are silhouetted at an evacuation center in Tabaloban, Albay, on Tuesday. Tens of thousands of residents living within the 8-kilometer danger zone are now likely to spend Christmas in evacuation shelters away from their homes.

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TOYS BRING COMFORT AND JOY The children who attended the read-along session at the InQuirer office in Makati got free stuffed toys courtesy of the Guardian Angels of America Foundation (GAAF), led by its founder, Lei Herrera, and Manila coordinator Dr. Philip Cruz. Since 1992, GAAF has been distributing toys to child patients in 19 hospitals in Metro Manila.

Guardian Angels spread joy, toys to poor kids

From page A1

Founder Lei Herrera has been flying from Los Angeles, California, to Manila, bringing with her bulk bayan boxes filled with toys.

Read more like this from Class

180 boxes of toys

This year, GAAF was able to distribute 180 boxes of toys to some 9,000 children confined in hospitals including Philippine General Hospital (PGH), Ospital ng Maynila, Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center, San Lazaro Hospital and the Philippine Children's Medical Center.

They also donate toys to National Children's Hospital, Philippine Orthopedic Center, Dr. Gloria M. Araneta Hospital, East Avenue Medical Center, Tondo General Hospital, Dean of Faith, Fabella, Cebu Children's Hospital, Nazareth Home for Street Children, Hermana Ilettona de la Paz Y Buen Viaje Foundation, San Miguel Foundation and other beneficiaries.

The foundation also donated toys to the indigent children who attended the Inquirer Read-Along on Dec. 12.

"In the future, there are kids who have a lot of toys but do not appreciate them. In the Philippines, there are a lot of children who do not have even all 3 know what toys mean to children. A toy can be a friend, a confidant or a companion. It's sad that there are children who have never experienced owning a toy. One day, I just thought of starting a toy drive," Herrera said.

Although officially established in 2006, the idea for GAAF started in 2002.

Herrera, with daughter Marina helping her, solicited and collected toys from relatives and friends in Los Angeles and ended up filling three bulkbayan boxes. Now who would die do with all those toys?

Cheering up kids

Herrera decided to "cheer up the sick children in the Philippines by sending it PGH." She called Dr. Philip Cruz, who was then chief resident of the PGH Department of Pediatrics and asked if he could help distribute the toys.

Cruz said yes and gave Herrera the young cancer patients of PGH. The toys arrived just in time for Christmas.

In 2003, GAAF brought in, not just three, but six bulkbayan boxes of toys. That year, Herrera and her daughter traveled to the Philippines to personally distribute toys to the children.

That was the start of Herrera's yearly travels to the country despite her dislike of plane rides.

"I really do not like airplanes," she said. "I feel uncomfortable and I cannot sleep. This is really bad because when I travel for GAAF I go straight from the airport to PGH and other beneficiary organizations. If there was any other way to travel, I would not take the airplane."

LEI HERRERA, GAAF founder

Necessary sacrifice

It was a necessary sacrifice, she admitted.

"The joy that I feel—that we all feel—when we see the faces of the children [when given a toy], is hard to describe. Believe that when sick children are happy, they heal faster. Seeing them happy makes me forget about any discomfort," Herrera said.

She said distributing toys was the easiest part of GAAF's activities. The hard part was collecting them.

They start soliciting as early as March, sending out e-mails to friends, relatives and other sponsors. When the toys start to arrive, they are packed in boxes. Come October, they are ready for shipping to the Philippines. Since 2002, Boxes Cargo has been shipping the toys for free to the Philippines. By December, the toys are distributed to different institutions.

"Our goal is to add more boxes and more beneficiaries every year," Herrera said.

Santa is real

"We also went in branch out. This year, we ventured into medical missions," said Cruz, who is GAAF coordinator in Manila.

GAAF has partnered with the Philippine Emergency Disaster Relief Organization (Pedro), an organization that provides assistance to disaster victims.

GAAF and Pedro visited affected areas of Tropical Storm "Ondoy" and gave away toys, food and medical supplies.

Herrera said GAAF could not have done so much for the children were it not for partners like Fedex Cargo and Mahalaw Shoes (which gives her free accommodations, the volunteers and people who donate toys for the children.

"It's proof that Santa Claus is real. In lives in each one of us. We are happy to share the joy with the children," Cruz said.

So what if GMA in HK as Mayon burns

From page A1

Mayon crisis.

It seemed one she had taken pains. Her husband, their children and grandchildren flew to Hong Kong on Sunday, the day after she arrived from Denmark.

"Her physical presence is not needed," Olivar yesterday told reporters in the course of detailing those questioning Ms Arroyo's absence in the face of yet another brewing calamity.

"I would describe them as people of small minds, cold hearts and mean spirit—totally without place in the Yuletide days," he said of her critics.

PRESIDENT ARROYO takes a break.

Olivar said reactions of the First Gentleman's three-day Hong Kong getaway is intended as a treat to her late grandchildren were "unfair" considering her "legendary passion for her work and the kind of hours she puts in."

Only 2 hours away

Volcanologists have predicted that a major explosion by Mayon would occur within days, prompting even the most obstinate residents to leave the permanent danger zone.

But Olivar defended the First Family's excursion to Hong Kong, pointing out that the former British territory was only less than two hours from Manila in case it became necessary for the President to return home quickly.

Ermita said Ms Arroyo had a standing order for authorities to ensure that no text there would be allowed to stay in the perimeter danger zone.

"Everything is in place," Olivar said. "Things should be managed by the crisis committee on the ground."

He refused to give details of the First Family's itinerary in Hong Kong, saying the affair was strictly private.

Ms Arroyo is scheduled to return to Manila today. She is to spend Christmas Eve tomorrow in her home province of Pampanga, where she is hoping for a congressional seat in the May 2010 elections.

Olivar had earlier admitted that Ms Arroyo would reach out to voters during the Christmas Eve visit. "I would imagine that while she's there, she would take the opportunity to visit her neighbors, her constituents, obviously her town that she needs to be concerned about in next year's elections."

No ceasefire

Holiday season or not, the critics of the administration urged not be silenced.

"My criticism is stop something, but if shooting [and] stealing continue we go on, there is a need to speak out," Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano told reporters.

"We wish [the First Family] a merry Christmas, but we hope the shooting and anomalies would stop in this country," he said.

His sister, Sen. Pia Cayetano, said public servants like Ms Arroyo were accountable for their actions the minute they get elected into office until they step down.

"So if you have been acting in a way that is subject to a lot of criticism, I don't think you can ask for a ceasefire," Pia Cayetano told reporters in separate interviews.

"You cannot ask people to look the other way as this government has chosen to in the face of so many flagrant violations of the Constitution and of the law," she said.

The senator added that Ms Arroyo's critics could not be silent when many corruption cases were not moving in the Office of the Ombudsman. **With a report** from Christine O. Avendaño

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Master plan

DEFENSE SECRETARY NORBERTO GONZALES already gave the nation "Oplan Ituang Laya," the administration's master plan for liquidating leftists, unleashing Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan to do its dirty work. When domestic and international public opinion loudly condemned her administration, President Macapagal-Arroyo responded by decrying extrajudicial killings while hailing Palparan in her 2006 State of the Nation Address. To this day, the disappearance of Jonas Burgos exemplifies the essential indifference and impunity the administration demonstrates towards the issue of extrajudicial killings.

EDITORIAL

While Oplan Ituang Laya constantly begins in 2002, when Angelo Reyes was secretary of national defense, it was during Norberto Gonzales Jr.'s stint as national security adviser beginning in 2004 that liquidation squads operating as some kind of parallel organization to the Armed Forces of the Philippines began to make their guilty presence felt in places like Central Luzon. Burgos was kidnapped during Hermogenes Ebdane's stint as defense secretary, but it was during Gonzales' brief first tenure in the department (July to August 2007) that the AFP stopped going through the motions of appearing concerned over the cases.

Fast forward to May 2009 when the President put forward during the Lakas-Kampi joint meeting her desire to put the "union" of local government units and the AFP as a major campaign plank going into the 2010 elections. No one in the new administration party registered an objection.

The plan was in place. The outgoing defense chief (and near-certain Lakas-Kampi presidential bet) Gilbert Teodoro, under whose watch the President proposed uniting the military and local governments in that "in 2010 [we will] have some of our LGUs fighting with the enemies of the state," was blandly supportive of his successor, none other than the once-convicted Gonzales. "He is the choice of the President," Teodoro said. "He had served as DND secretary before...a civilian. That is the choice of the President and we must support her choice." In response to pesky human rights questions, Teodoro said, "We have human rights programs and enforcement. I think that will not change."

Gonzales has now decided to further flesh out the administration plan by formally putting on the table an suspended role for the military in elections. He suggests that the AFP get involved in assigning security escorts to candidates, participating in the canvassing of votes, and transporting of ballot boxes. Under an existing agreement with the Commission on Elections, the military is limited to securing specific areas upon the Comelec's request, operating checkpoints, and enforcing the gun ban during the election period.

Militarizing claims this is the Comelec's idea, and that the President is only interested in principle while her defense secretary is still putting the proposal together.

Critics have expressed alarms over Gonzales' latest brain child because it might reverse efforts to insulate the military from partisan politics and lead to a repeat of 2004, when partisan generals and other senior military officers engaged in electoral maneuvers on behalf of the administration. Gonzales for his part claims the Maguindanao Massacre lends urgency to his proposal.

The blunt reality is that Gonzales is merely implementing a policy the President herself laid out as a core strategy for her party retaining its clout beyond 2010. Partisanship is precisely what she wants, for both the military and her local allies: a partnership with specific political objectives in mind.

On the eve of Teodoro's retention as administration standard bearer, former Rep. Prospero Pichay said Lakas-Kampi-CMD could count on a solid 33 percent of the votes, which its local allies would deliver for their presidential candidate. A public statement of the President's marching orders found this assertion crazy. Under the supervision of the military's guns, egos the helpful urging of the Comelec, this disturbing possibility becomes more plausible.

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The mysterious black sands of Buguey, Cagayan

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

SOME TIME AGO, I WROTE A COLUMN about the mining of black sand from the beaches of Buguey, Cagayan, by Iberian nationals. The sand was reportedly being shipped to China to a Korean vessel. The beaches of other municipalities in Cagayan have already been stripped of sand, according to reports, so that sea water enter the farms, killing the crops.

Why do they want the black sands of Buguey? Why are the provincial government of Cagayan and the municipal government of Buguey fighting tooth and nail?

The sands of Buguey are black because they are heavy with magnetite, a ferromagnetic mineral with chemical formula $Fe3O4$. It is one of several iron oxides and a member of the spinel group. The chemical name is iron (II,III) oxide and the common chemical name is ferrous-ferric oxide.

Magnetite is the most magnetic among all naturally occurring minerals. Because it attracts small pieces of iron, this was how man first discovered magnets.

Black sands are magnetic found in large quantities on the beach, the magnetite carried in the beach by ocean and river flow, forming huge quantities on the beach and offshore as the magnetite is concentrated by wave action and sediment.

Magnetite is used to make steel, magnets, paint, ink, paper, jewelry, and cosmetics. It is also used as an additive for high strength concrete. Russia, a highly industrialized country, needs plenty of magnetite for its mills and factories. Thus, it is not hard to believe that Russian nationals are mining the beaches of Buguey for the magnetite.

Because of the protests of the people of Buguey and its mayor and municipal council, Environment Secretary Lito Atienza issued a cease-and-desist order (CDO) to the miners who have been issued by the provincial governor even as a small-scale mining permit (SSMP). An inter-agency committee went too also sent to Buguey to look at the mining activities there, if any. The team was composed of experts from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine National Police (PNP), and National Economic Development Authority (Neda).

Recently, I received a copy of the report of the team and is fairness to everybody concerned, I am summarizing here the report of the team led by MGB Director Medardo Arcilla.

The team reported that it went to Bonot, Buguey, Cagayan, and had a short meeting with Mayor Ignacio Zarate and the members of the Alliance of Buguey for Community Development Advocacy (ABlueAda). A video footage of the Korean vessel supposedly outlying black sand from the shoreline of Mitungao Shore and Villa Jesmena was shown.

The team also interviewed a fisherman, Jerry S. Cimatu, who said that his group, together with other fishermen, witnessed the presence of a vessel in the Mitungao area on the morning of Oct. 11, 2009. They said they approached the vessel out of curiosity and were able to count seven crew members. He also narrated that the vessel, with Chinese characters and the number 0007 painted on its side, continuously dispersed of water through a tube in the stern.

A resident, Elizabeth Villalon, said that she saw a vessel sucking sand on Oct. 13, 12, and 13, 2009, starting at about 10 a.m., for about three to five hours each day within the prohibited zone.

Another resident, Bonnie Arellano, also saw the same vessel on Oct. 13. It appeared to be "loaded and heavy about noontime," he said.

While the team was at Mitungao Shore, where the video of the vessel was taken, residents began to approach the group. Taking advantage of their presence, the team interviewed some of them. They claimed that they saw a vessel off the shores of Mitungao Shore on Oct. 11, 2009, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Together with fisherfolk members, the team was then transported by boat to Mitungao Shore, the site covered by the SSMP. The group saw dumping and iron smallings scattered in the area, but there was no mining activity.

The group then went to the Bureau of Customs in Aparri, Cagayan. Customs records showed that one Mitt Fe Iron Ore, No. 0007, with Chinese crewmembers, arrived at the port of Aparri on Sept. 23, 2009.

The BoC showed the team a copy of the clearing permit that the PPA Aparri issued on Sept. 24, 2009, as requested by John Peter, the vessel agent. The purpose of the clearing of the vessel from Aparri to Buguey was "to iron river sand of Buguey, Cagayan."

The customs inspector, Oliver Lato, said he boarded the vessel when it proceeded to Mitungao, Buguey, on Oct. 11 and 12, 2009. He confirmed to the team that the vessel indeed entered and left anchorage.

During its visit, the team saw that the vessel was still docked at the western bank of the Cagayan River.

Here comes the team's findings and observations:

"1. It was confirmed that the vessel MV Mitt Fe Iron Ore No. 0007 with Chinese crew that docked at the port of Aparri on Sept. 23, 2009 is the same vessel referred to by the fisherfolk as having been seen offshore of Buguey on Oct. 11, 12, and 13, 2009.

"2. The vessel removed sand for sampling purposes in Mitungao Shore, Buguey, as supported by the dulong permit and by the Customs officer Oliver Lato.

"3. At the time of the team's visit of Oct. 20, 2009, there was no sand-mining operations in Mitungao Shore when a small-scale Mining Permit was earlier approved but later stopped by a CDO."

I hope this satisfies everybody.

Eyes

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE and Development had a piece of advice to give the public last week: Don't give to condoes on the streets. What they are doing is not caroling, it is begging, a thing frowned upon by the law. Instead, the department asked that children that the activity are punishable by law. "Caroling in the streets," said Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral, "is risky, especially for children who separate themselves from their kin and tap on car windows, or those who jump from moving public utility vehicles, unmindful of the danger to their life and limb."

It's a reasonable proposition. In the same way that the airport authorities have a reasonable proposition: I laughed my head off at their in banning personnel from greeting passengers "Merry Christmas" for it is misconstrued as solicitation. Well, there would be no misconstruction there. Sensitive in the world does a Yuletide greeting hoot-as-a-tattoo-in chain to our airports, the subtext being that if their greeting doesn't get you in an expansive mood they can always look you in an expensive dollar. Unfortunately, it's not just words that carry that message. Obsequious smiles have been known to do the trick just as well.

But to go back. Of course, it's not caroling. Firstlight isn't the jagged sounds of basic banking, drunken drooling, and chain-linking in succession as the world are not exactly conducive to evoking silent nights and holy nights and nights divine. And to any case, they are not the preferred drums. What's on is the "in thing" lately, any among them," a variation of "in my holiday gig among them." That can at least be incredibly forthright about its intentions: "Any santo po ng pagpasyo, lalunge po ng agnaldo. Offers here to suit for a gift." Sung in the proper spirit, that sounds playful, sung drudgingly that sounds like a threat.

The visitors are in fact forestall (the better to get to as many cars as possible before the light turns green) are normally accompanied by vigorous tapping on windows. You don't stay back at the first tone, or well before they break into well, something resembling song, they'll bail: get you.

So, yes, the DSWD's advice is reasonable, but it's one that is close in the head but a little hazy in the heart. The logic, quite incidentally, I used to hear during my activist days. The comrades who warned against going to bagan, whatever form they took because it was [illegible] to the fellowship, the camaraderie, and individual hitching rather than through justice and collective struggle. An activist told me once that he made it a point when children came to him with palms outstretched to spurn them while saying, "Imperyalism ako!" That story, by the way, he gave Bisaya to. Know the word "imperyalism" in association with something nasty. I warned for its laughter, but it did not relate. I realized there was something not in the philosophy that tended to dispassionate people of their humor.

Beggars, however—and their tribe increases by the day to various forms of disguised begging, from caroling to slapping sunny water on your windshield...are not so easily dismissed in the heart. I've always thought they posed a kind, even to the mind.

The best way to deal with them of course is to not look them in the eye. At the very least don't so because eye contact is the equivalent of the first question you ask the salesperson who knocks on your door. As everyone knows, never do that. Just say, "Sorry," if you're in the mood to be polite or slam the door on his face if you're not. You ask a question and that's his one foot in the door, which can sometimes be really literal.

But more than that, don't look the ragged children in the eye because if you do, you impale their fleeting forms into reality. You transform a vague and abstract presence into living tissue, into flesh and bone, into solid matter, as solid as the hard rap on your window. You look them in the eye, and suddenly, interestingly, mysteriously, you're no longer looking at a homeless man, you are looking at a four-year-old...if he's as old as, it's not easy in modern age to age street faces...trudging along with not much older company, a taxi and worn-out T-shirt that may even his body like a tent.

But this best way of dealing with the problem is the same best way to make the problem snap. Which is the kind. I've always thought the only reason we've kept our equanimity in the face of the teeming poverty around us, some of us, is that it is too mind-boggling to contemplate, is that it is invisible to us. It is invisible to us because we choose to. We choose not to because we do not look it in the eye. And because we do not look it in the eye, the panel, the beggars, or cadgers on the street, cease to exist. They are not a thing, a ghost, an apparition. But this by but is recalibrated in the fear and smoke when the light flashes green.

By all means let us not give to cadgers on the streets, or out-and-out beggars who badger us with their pain and their humiliation. Because we do not want to be reminded every day during Christmas, a season dedicated to discovering the existence of others. But whether we give or not, the point is to not be blind to their being there, to not make them disappear in the mind, if not in space, because they are no more invisible to God than the angels are. Those cadgers, whether we see them or not, the beggars, the throngs of empty street on wind-chords, the children in the streets, who while making for the cars to stop mind to our before the tailoring shop outer where I live, situating the dark shell outlines their precarious rooms. They will continue to be there like an indictment, like an accusing finger, like a question hanging in the air demanding an answer.

Like eyes that know. Like eyes that bind.

Militarization of the election

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

DEFENSE SECRETARY NORBERTO GONZALES has said the Nov. 23 massacre in Maguindanao is a pretext to expand the role of the Armed Forces in policing the May 2010 national election, or a rude act worse than dishing the Hak rebellion in the late 1940s. The alarmed comparison of military intervention in election debacle drew a rebuttal from Gen. Rodolfo Biazon, former Armed Forces chief of staff, that the scheme is "dangerous" and creates conditions that would expose soldiers to "partisan politics."

The defense department is working out its rearrangement of the military on Election Day that would place the AFP at the "full disposal" of the Comelec to curb private armies and prevent a repeat of the Maguindanao massacre wherein 57 people were killed. Gonzales cited intelligence reports of heavy purchases of weapons by local politicians in the run-up to the election. He said in final 120 days before actual groups could access the country armed with about one million heavy firearms.

The scheme was touted as a solution to the inadequate enforcement of armed groups loyal to politicians, a problem who are known to have used these private armies to intimidate voters and rig elections in past and last nine local elections. It was billed as a measure to preserve the "sanctity of the ballot."

It has yet to be demonstrated that deputizing the AFP by expanding its duties to watch over the behavior of private armies, has there are strong reasons against this idea.

According to Gonzales, the new memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Comelec would allow the AFP to meet the challenge of securing the election. He said the agreement would show that the AFP "is a true protector of democracy and the democratic space."

The agreement seeks to replace an agreement signed in 2006 between the Comelec and AFP. The old agreement limited the involvement of the military in the electoral process to providing security to election officials, operating direct points and imposing the gun ban during the election season. It banned the AFP from acting as security escorts of candidates, participating in the canvassing of votes and transporting ballot boxes.

Last week, the Comelec approved a new resolution allowing a maximum of five soldiers to accompany candidates in election, but spots, resulting the 2007 MOA. The revised rule is expected to expand the deployment of troops to trouble spots and as a consequence of the Nov. 23 massacre, where the military deployed up to 3,000 troops to arrest members of the Ampatuan clan and end their rebellion, in the process uncovering weapons arsenals and chasing 3,000 armed men of the Ampatuan to maintain who fought government troops and police. This new agreement is expected to have been a wider troop deployment not only in Mindanao but also in areas of election-trouble spots.

The military is worried that the crackdown on the Ampatuans is evoking a power vacuum in areas experiencing other forms of insurgencies. With nearly 4,000 troops deployed to Maguindanao, the concentration of troops has shifted many from areas threatened by the communist insurgency which Nurulsad Macapaal troops ordered the AFP to crush by the end of last week in June next year.

The President declared martial law to dismantle the military base of the Ampatuans and break their political power in the province. "The law do not regard you operations against the Ilaw People's army," said Lt. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, the top military officer in charge of the operation of the military operation against the ERB.

The Ampatuans, who have been declared enemies of the state, were embraced as allies by the previous government in the fight also against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Biazon has warned that any deployment of troops for election duties except for security and defense "can be the beginning of partisan politics infecting the military, particularly troops securing candidates. They are not trained, their are not equipped and not supposed to perform local-based duties."

The use of soldiers for partisan political reasons was feared by several political actors, including the party list Bayan Muna, which said that "due to widespread fear of militarization in the electoral front in the 2010 elections, an active agent giving the AFP an expanded role in the next election."

The MOA with the Comelec opens a broader area of intervention by the military in election proceedings than has ever been seen in post-independence history.

The Philippine Constitution states that the military is "subordinate to the civilian authority" and is "insulated from partisan politics." The MOA with the Comelec opens a broader area of intervention by the military in election proceedings than has ever been seen in post-independence history.

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Climate justice

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ONE OF THE CONCEPTS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE recent United Nations Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen was "climate justice." This is the idea that those who contributed most to the degradation of the environment and to the dire consequences of climate change should be made to shoulder their proper share of the costs of restoring it to have developing countries affected. By the same token, countries that have contributed the least damage, and benefited the least from the emissions of the earth's ecosystem, should receive the aid they need to counter the effects of climate change.

In other words, as is a supreme example of global inequality, it that happened that the poor nations of the world, which have contributed the poverty and simple lifestyle of its people leave a much lighter "carbon footprint" than wealthier nations, also suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change.

The concept of climate justice acknowledges that because the world's richest countries have contributed most to the problem, they have a greater obligation to take action and to do so more quickly," according to members of the book "Climate Justice: A Citizen's Manual". A Primer for Policy Makers and NGO's.

The book, says the secretary, "places a light on the important intersection of equity and justice in the context of the world's response to climate change. The book "explores climate justice as an emerging concept and as a key to understanding the global climate debate. The book demonstrates that climate justice is not only an ethical imperative, but also as practical way to avoid one."

Indeed, as we have noted on many occasions, "climate change further exacerbates existing inequalities and is faced by vulnerable groups. It threatens to undermine the realization of fundamental rights for many people and to reverse progress made towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)."

AS THE DISAPPOINTING results of the Copenhagen Summit show, even as global momentum builds regarding the perilous state of the planet, governments, especially those with financial, economic and military clout, still will resist the thrust to impose restrictions on activities that threaten to (and have) most influential citizens.

"Many fear that whatever international agreement is reached between governments, it will compound the already unjust burden on the poor, the small and vulnerable. We've seen a rapidly growing number of social movements and civil society organizations across the world are mobilizing around this climate justice agenda. Citizens from both the South and the North are coming to this concept, in part because they are already experiencing the impacts of climate change and they worry about the fate of their families, homes and livelihoods."

The biggest point raised by "Climate Justice is a Changing Planet," the author says, "is that addressing and reducing emissions is no longer enough. It is that "equity [should be] at the core of any response to climate change," and that nations and peoples must ensure that any attempt to address the challenge should be done "simultaneously with the international development agenda, achieving poverty reduction, and respecting international human rights." Otherwise, mitigating climate change alone could result in the perpetuation and worsening of already existing injustices in the world.

* * *

THE ECO-WASTE Coalition, a network of over 95 citizens' groups, recently issued a statement on the disappointing results of the Copenhagen Summit. The statement was made in consideration with the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Incinerator Watch Inter-Asia, Basel Action Network, Greenpeace Philippines, Health Care Without Harm, Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance, Ban Toxics, Bukluran para sa Ikauunlad ng Sambayanan (BUKLURAN), Ecological Citizens against Pollution, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Central Province, Mother's Green Drugs Philippines, Mayflash in Isang Dagang, Mother Earth Foundation, and Pagtulungan Kayo Mahal Kita Environmental Society.

"It's a sad time for humanity and a damning indictment of our leaders' failure to unleash of the world," the statement said of the summit's outcome. "Painstaking two years of preparation and two weeks of tortuous negotiations, the conference failed to agree on a new climate framework and could only muster "take note" of a contentious and fatally flawed Copenhagen Accord that was engineered and supported only by five states led by the US and slammed by many other parties as undemocratic."

The coalition urges politicians as well as citizens and civil societies across the globe "to insist on equal, ambitious and legally-binding deal in 2010 to save the climate crisis from escalating further and causing massive hardship to poor and marginalized communities around the globe at the Copenhagen climate failure."

HOPE: The failure of our leaders (including our President who cut short her trip to Copenhagen to be with her grandson) to agree on a legally binding deal is bound to generate a public outcry.

Tomorrow, as we begin the Yuletide Christmas celebration, let's keep the administration in mind while we have yummy festive tables, as change gifts and build a small mountains of discarded gift wrappers, paper ribbons and bows.

It's never too late to live the green lifestyle.

Economic history

LOOKING BACK

Anthony H. Cordero

TO A GENERATION THAT CAME OF AGE WITH the Iphone and Blackberry, those devices with pocket phones with a dial, those with rotary tables that pulse made owns, like schools from the Hak ages. But once upon a time, when PLDT had a monopoly over phone service and customers had to endure a long wait to acquire a phone line, some people were half lucky to obtain one but with a hefty 500 monthly fee and were called a "per p-line." Imagine our phone line for two households who don't know each other? Phone are probably brought out the seen in the Filipino dramatics.

Imagine if time-share phones were still new and VIPs had numbers with only one digit or two. Boys didn't need to memorize numbers.

We can go even further, when phones had numbers other only had a single digit or two. Boys then could not dial don't had had to go through an operator.

If you did not a dedicated dialer and compulsion not to keep the Hand did not learn as with his first impressions of the telephone, unlike liberals do! Pilot who was in home and wrote his wife in Bulacan, wrote into this wonderful contraption that transmitted their voice from his office to long distance. Instead left an article his wife to call him side in an obscure in 1932, unlike Emilio Aguinaldo who was one of the first Filipinos to own a car, an airplane and a submarine but did not record the experience. How can historians ever attempt to re-create the past when the available documents are not at all interesting or important?

I remember old phone directories that came in two editions, the white pages, containing the names of subscribers, alphabetically arranged, and the yellow pages, containing business and commercial subscribers arranged according to commercial activities. I checked it out in 1970 and to encourage customers to use these hefty phone books whose manufacturer contributed to global warming and the demolition of our forests. The logo had broken smartly on no open page and the slogan was "Let your fingers do the walking."

Then came the second directory assistance you called and his customer don't figure it the walking way.

Again all this seems ancient to a generation that searches for everything on the Internet. You can order almost anything on the Internet from a thing, from jams to banned movies, to only one dick of the mount army.

Old phone and business directories with their voluminous information are only useful to historians, businessmen trying to make sense of Philippine society and entrepreneurs who are simply interested in the past. The textbook history I grew up with was focused on political history and the great men who made or broke important events. The post-modern approach is divided according to terms of procedures rather than social themes rather than topic them. Researchers to trade and economic history were class and did not connect to society or the development of the nation.

All I remember from my history classes that the Philippines was involved in wars from the struggle against Spain and 1 (1868-1898) only in the 19th century when the Galleon Trade collapsed and the Philippines was ejected to trade, that bringing in other goods, other nationalities, and new ideas that led to the Revolution. There is no mention of the cash crop economy and the exports of sugar, tobacco, coconut and hemp. Historians failed to see exported were raw products, with the exception of rajah and cigarettes, and that everything was transported and worked by hand from farm to the pier.

However, all the new studies were thanks to Dr. E. Corpuz's "Economic History of the Philippines."

While reading the work of Dr. Corpuz, I was drawn to a table lifted from the 1903 census list, my scholarly establishments and farming them according to their geographic distribution by provinces. Filipinos may have imported most other goods but I also made their things. If you shop and go over the list, you get an idea of the Philippines at the end of the bloody struggle at the last decade of the 19th century. There were 326 firms that made bread and bakery products in 31 provinces, followed by 225 in 21 provinces that made alcoholic beverages and beer in 21 provinces. Men's clothing and tailors, with 138 recorded establishments in 7 provinces, ranked third, followed by 108 establishments that manufactured agricultural implements

Fervent prayer not enough to make Christmas meaningful

LETTERS

TO ASK ABOUT THE MEANING OF CHRIST-mas is to ask about the meaning of love. To love means to suffer. Jesus died on the Cross to atone for our sins. What is the significance of this religious message in our present time?

What it means is that the more we oppressed eyes to the kind of country that we have right now, where poor children risk their lives on the streets for home change, the more we need for that very reason, more especially our presidents, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, have failed us.

Public service means the sacrifice of oneself for the greater good of the most disadvantaged. Unless a government fulfills its mission of securing the good for all and not just of a chosen few, then that government has lost its reason to be.

I have observed that there are many Sports Utility Vehicles in our city than are local bothers that I have also observed that for most children have become beggars. Should it be possible for these people not to buy SUVs and instead drive less expensive cars in order to raise funds for the scholarship of all poor children? Sending the planes, too, is not a bad idea. But it might be too late to save our children from becoming criminals rather than to stop climate change from gaining a tool impact on our doorsteps.

I wonder what kind of world it would be if GMA had not been corrupt, if there were no 30% on government projects, if there were no bribes and scams, and if we had all the money that is funneled on treasury—what kind of country the Philippines would have been? No more in-office means thousands of days to drink about the good things that can be done to help the poor. But it only requires a spin-out and does not have to be a good or bad president.

There was a time when there's going get to penny. Moments later, she ran toward her mother who took it away from her. Our laws tell us that giving alms to the poor is wrong. Charity is sometimes related with respecting but when our basic systems of governance have failed, what can we do? Right at this very moment, we forward prayers for a meaningful Christmas may not be enough.

Children still believe in Christmas. It is all about giving love. We unless our leaders remember that Christ gave (the life in order to save us all, then we can, nobody will ever liberate us and we have the bondage of disunity and hopelessness.

—CHRISTOPHER JUAN BAROLOC,
Main Philosophy
Ateneo de Davao University
(cmbaroloc@yahoo.com)

EDSA Bloodless Aquino III holds up his certificate of candidacy for president

ARNOLDUS CHAN

Integration as alternative to ARMM segregation

THE HISTORICK OF TWO CULTURES OR religions in one area has been the bane of countries like Israel and Palestine, England and Ireland, Canada and its native peoples, America and the American Indians, and Christians and Muslims in Mindanao.

The crux of the problem is either territorial, religious or both. In America and Canada which have an abundance of land, the native peoples have been given reservations together with the freedom to integrate. In England and Ireland, the problem was basically religious but because of continuing dialogue, bars remain but there is peaceful co-existence.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is both territorial and religious in origin. On one hand, it seems from Israel's stubborn construction in historically traditional Palestinian lands; on the other, it is about who should control Jerusalem, the cradle of three faiths—Christian, Muslim and Jewish.

Our problem in Mindanao is basically territorial. Efforts [end] for the autonomy program was launched in Mindanao during the time of President Ramon Magsaysay. Christian settlers resigned to Mindanao where virgin forests were converted to farms and land after they were logged. Since Muslims are culturally rovers and traders, they found out later that their ancestral lands had been subdivided and titled, hence, the present problem. Widespread discontent among Muslim families led to the emergence and extremists.

The government policy in Mindanao has been occupatic through segregation, thus, the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). There has been a continuing clamor for the ARMM to be given more territory.

With the Maguindanao massacre, there seems a strong arguments for a closer, second look at the more policy of separation through the ARMM. How about the discriminative and more cohesive policy of integration? By giving land to our landless Muslim families, the territorial integrity is diffused. There can be revision of Magsaysay's laws for the landless program with out landless Muslim families in beneficiaries. The State will use ample public lands in Mindanao for this purpose.

We already fractured our collective ethnic to Luzon. The ARMM has not done its role and is subject to abuse as shown by the devastating Maguindanao massacre. We have to try the integration option rather than the divisive ARMM segregation from the social and political mainstream.

The Philippines is a small country and we need to safeguard its territorial integrity where both Muslims and Christians can co-exist peacefully as brothers. Our leaders must desist from using our Muslim brothers as pawns in their struggle for political power and as pawns in their quest and votes in the south.

Have peace and order is a social issue in the coming elections, should we elect seriously ask our many presidential aspirants how they intend to address this problem?

—FRUCTUOSO JUARIL,
Professor
Social Policy Laboratory
(Tandayuhi, White Plains,
Quezon City

Similarities between US and RP leaders

UNCOUS NOYNOY AQUINO WILL be the presidency in 2010, there will be parallelisms between him and the 15th presidents of the United States, James Buchanan. Noynoy will also be:

1. the 15th president of the Philippines.

2. a bachelor president.

3. a former congressman and senator.

Both Buchanan and Aquino were also named after their fathers. Both have simple names. And both lived with a nephew. Buchanan with Henry Nephew with Joshua.

Other would be similarities.

The 15 th and 16th presidents of the United States had the same first name, James Polk and James Buchanan, respectively. Buchanan belonged to the Calvinist family of Presbyterian as secretary of state. The the 15 th and 16th presidents of the Philippines would have the same family name, Cory Aquino and Noynoy Aquino, respectively. Noynoy belonged to the Free Penitents of Mary Freedom Roman Catholic Aquino.

In the 1856 US presidential election won by Buchanan, his rivals were John Fremont and former president Millard Fillmore. Fremont was the runners-up and Fillmore, a poor third. Coincidentally, Noynoy and 2010 presidential candidates Joseph Estrada were both former 3 Jde presidents. Both served for two and a half years (32 months) only and were known by the 3 Jde presidents—Fidel Ramos by Buchanan and Estrada by Aquino.

Likewise, there were two sets of fathers and two sets were served as presidents of the United States, (1) John Adams (1797-1801) and John Quincy Adams (1825-1829) and (2) George H.W. Bush (1989-1993) and George W. Bush (2001-2009). In the Philippines, there would also be sets: (1) Benigno Aquino (1961-1964) and Benigno Aquino (2001-2010) and (2) Corazon Aquino (1986-1992) and Noynoy Aquino (2010-2016)—a father-daughter and father-son combination.

The Adamses and Aquinos all had one term each; on the other hand, comparing the Bushes and the Macapagals, the fathers had one term each while the son and the daughter had two terms each; both started serving in the same year (2001) and ended for almost the same number of years (8-9).

Interestingly, in the cases of former US presidents starting for a lower position, John Quincy Adams, the son, planned to retire after losing his reelection bid to Andrew Jackson in 1828, but the people asked him to run for Congress in 1830 or after two years. In the case of Presidents Noynoy, she is running for Congress in 2013 even as she remains president.

Adams' greatest role may have been in the debates on the abolition of slavery. Gloria role could be in Charter change, symbolically with regard to the shift in the form of government from presidential to parliamentary, or in the abolition of the presidency.

—CARLOS D. ZARAGOZA,
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Cordillera autonomy as a poll issue

By Delmar Cariño
Baguio City

EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE BID for Cordillera autonomy appear to be sputtering, and with elections just around the corner, fears have been raised that the region's wish for more political clout might go down the drain.

The constitutional mandate for an autonomous region remains, says Jean Njalob, National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) director in the Cordillera and acting Regional Development Council (RDC) chair.

"It's the only way the region could accelerate its development by formulating and implementing its own development agenda through the exercise of its devolved powers," Njalob says.

Lukewarm support

But Dr. Virgilio Bautista, former University of Baguio president and RDC member, says searching the grassroots of the region's communities—Benguet, Ifugao, Apayao, Kalinga, Abra, Mt. Province and Baguio City—to explain what changes autonomy could bring is hampered by what many perceive as a lukewarm support from local officials.

"There is obviously lack of noise from those we expected to spearhead discussions on autonomy," he says.

Others say the inability of government agencies to relate their programs with autonomy and a zero allocation from this year's and probably next year's national budget for information dissemination have dimmed the bid for an autonomous region.

Neda wants the Cordillera to become the country's model for a balanced ecosystem. It has called on officials to adopt as their platform its 66-page regional development agenda.

But neither the candidates mostly expected to run in the May 10 elections nor the region's voters, in 1990 and 1998, rejected two laws passed by Congress that called for the establishment of the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

But the bid for autonomy got its third wind when Congress appropriated P15 million in 2005 and P38 million in 2008 to be used for "actual preparation for an autonomous region."

Survey

Immediately, the RDC commissioned a survey to find out why the two previous bases for autonomy were rejected. It, however, did not say how many Cordilleras were included in the survey.

On the level of awareness, the survey showed that 64 percent were not aware that the Constitution allowed the region to become autonomous.

PATRIOTIC Igorot youths queue up to register and vote in the 2010 elections.

Cordillera Administrative Region

In another set of questions on the readiness of the region to embrace autonomy, 40 percent said they were not sure if the region was ready to become autonomous.

The RDC members, upon seeing the results, decided to start from scratch by holding a massive information, education and communication (IEC) campaign.

But the RDC and Neda decided to take a different track this time. Instead of building advocacy campaigns for the people, the agencies opted to first educate local government officials and government agencies about autonomy.

Trailblazing

Neda calls the stage trailblazing. "We have to [educate] our local officials first to increase the level of awareness and widen the autonomy issue to a desired level," Njalob says.

The RDC, he says, worked to set in place an atmosphere where autonomy itself would be discussed so the needed information for a better law would be gathered.

Njalob says local officials and government agencies are the primary targets of the information and education campaign since they would soon lead the grassroots campaign in their communities.

The task is also meant to prepare the region—on the major areas of an autonomous government—administrative organization, creation of revenue, ancestral domain and natural resources, personal, family and property relations; regional, urban and rural development, educational policies, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

"Once the campaign is completed and there would still be a chance for an autonomous region, then Congress would be asked to pass a third organic act to be submitted to the people for approval," Njalob says.

"We want to be sure of our steps this time. We [educate] our local officials first before we campaign before the people," he says.

Baguio City Mayor Mauricio Domogan has been the most vocal local official about autonomy. Kalinga Gov. Florencio Dunos and Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog say they and the other governors support the drive for autonomy.

Polls as threat

But the progress in the autonomy drive is being threatened by the 2010 elections, according to media people who joined an IEC autonomy workshop on autonomy.

They say next year's elections could sidetrack the autonomy bid.

But Bautista says only the media could use the political exercise as a venue where the autonomy issue could be discussed.

"Make it an election issue," he says. "The media must push autonomy into an agenda. Media [organizations are] in the best position to do that because [they] could reach a broad spectrum of the people."

Bautista says that with media making regional autonomy an agenda, some misplaced ideas about autonomy would be corrected.

Among them, he says, are fears that politicians would perpetuate themselves in power once the region becomes autonomous or that the security of tenure of government employees would be threatened.

While these issues are valid, there are not as effective as understanding the entire political and economic implications of an autonomous region, he says.

"Autonomy would enhance the region's development. But the people in the communities must be able to relate how they lives could improve under an autonomous government," he says.

> 'There is obviously lack of noise from those we expected to spearhead talks on autonomy'

Rediscovering Pangasinan

By Gabriel Cardenas
Lingayen, Pangasinan

MORE AND MORE residents of Pangasinan are discovering and rediscovering the province's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

Thanks to the "Lakbay Edukasyon Na!" educational tour program launched this year by Gov. Gov. Marilyn Primicias-Agabas and her husband, Board Member Tyrone Agabas.

The one-day tour, which has been taking place every Saturday and Monday since May, has brought thousands of Pangasinenses to the towns of Lingayen, Binalonan, Alaminos City and the pilgrimage town of Manaoag.

Primicias-Agabas said she started the educational tour after finding out that many residents, especially those from the eastern towns, had not yet seen the provincial capitol in Lingayen or travelled to the western towns.

"Many elderly citizens, for example, tell us that they have not been to Bolinao or Alaminos yet. Maybe, only five to 100 people would say they have been to these places," she said.

"What a pity. They are already old and they have not seen Pangasinan. Some of them have gone to other provinces, others have been abroad, and yet, they have not seen their own province," she said.

Ms. Lakbay Edukasyon, previously known as Lakbay, said the tour was a big boost to the tourism program of the provincial government, which has been promoting the newly refurbished capitol and its surroundings as center of tourism.

First-timers

Eduasyon's office has been supporting the program by providing free guides trained by the Department of Tourism. Since September last year, the office has registered some 15,000 visitors—most of them first-timers—to the capitol.

"You should see the amazement in the faces of those who are coming to the capitol for the first time," Eduasyon said.

MANAOAG CHURCH.

Aside from the capitol building tour that includes visits to the offices of the governor and vice governor, and the provincial board's session hall, tourists are taken to the Welcome Park to view mounted kiosks and select photos taken in the province during World War II.

They also tour the Lingayen Beach, the newly built provincial library and the Narciso Ramos Sports and Civic Center, site of the 1991 Palarong Pambansa.

THE HUNDRED Islands National Park.

A TOUR guide [below] shows a point to a group of capitol tourists during one of the weekend tours. At the background is the newly refurbished provincial building.

Moreover, they visit a fingering fish patrol station and the Hamon mansion/ home a few blocks from the capitol.

"Soon, the tour itinerary will include the Sison auditorium (the province's cultural center) and the Urduja House (the governor's official residence)," Eduasyon said. The two buildings are undergoing renovation.

From the capitol, tourists board for about two hours to Bolinao, straight to the white sand beach of Barangay Patar, where a lighthouse is located.

"They'll usually arrive by lunchtime and they would have picnic at the beach," Primicias-Agabas said.

After taking their lunch, they go to the provincial government's agriculture extension office in Barangay Arnedo, where they see abalone fish ponds and mangrove plantations.

In Alaminos, they take a short stop at the Lucap wharf, the jump-off point to the Hundred Islands National Park. There they visit a fingerling (native sausage) maker to watch how the product is made.

In total, they ride drop by the dried fish makers and buy some for their families, Primicias-Agabas said.

Manaoag Shrine

The last leg of the tour is a visit to the shrine of the Miraculous Virgin of Manaoag, where they end the day with prayers.

Primicias-Agabas said the educational tours had been possible at no expense to the tourists because the provincial government buses could be used for free.

Gov. Amado Espino Jr. bought several buses in 2007 as coconut and diesille vehicles for provincial employees.

Rosalina Bautista, school teacher Zamora in Guimaras, 60, who was in one of the tours, said she was so excited she could not sleep the night before the trip.

"It has been years since I last saw the capitol and I am so happy to have seen how beautiful it is! My lesson today," said the Guimaras, whose village, Guimaras Viejo in Sinadon town, is 60 kilometers southeast of the capitol of Lingayen.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Burgonia

Aurora raid yields 100 kg of 'shabu'

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the police have seized about 100 kilograms of suspected shabu in Dingalan, Aurora, on Monday night.

The alleged shabu (metamphetamine hydrochloride) was found hidden in a big rice cauldron. Wrapped in mats, it was recovered along the shoreline of Sitio Amucao in Malasero in Dingalan.

The town, some eight hours' drive here, is on the eastern shore of Central Luzon. Malasero is closer to Infanta town in Quezon province.

The suspect did not show up at the supposed pick-up point, according to Senior Supt. Romeo Ilarina, Aurora police chief.

He said the PDEA and the police were checking reports that the seaweed might have been obtained from the shabu laboratory busted by authorities three years ago and that there were efforts to establish a new facility in the town.

He, however, said charges against three Chinese suspects in the 2006 raid were dismissed.

Drug syndicates are starting to make Central Luzon a base for making shabu as a more point for drug imports, a legislator said—744 kg worth P4 billion—was seized in the Subic Bay Freeport in May 2008.

Director Dionisio Santiago, PDEA chief, said the agency was tracing the ownership of the Aurora haul.

"We have reason to believe that some local personalities are involved and that they have been doing this for quite some time now," Santiago said.

He said the agency suspects that the drugs were dropped from a ramp boat some 15 kilometer from the shore of Dingalan Bay.

The fight against illegal drugs continues elsewhere.

In Illamia City in Leyte, PDEA agents and police arrested two sons of prominent political families for alleged drug use.

Arrested were Manuel Ilonga IV and Daniel Tingson at a 2 a.m. raid on Saturday.

Police, in a report at a local radio station, said four packets of shabu were recovered at the house of Ilonga.

Ilonga IV is son of lawyer Manuel Ilonga III, administrative officer of the provincial engineering office, and Los Adobas Ilonga, candidate for mayor-for-another the Nationalist People's Coalition.

Tingson is alleged son of the brother of former governor Rosette Yñiguez Lerias.

Ilonga's mother, Lou, said the pieces of evidence that police were using against her son were planted.

The search on her son's house, she said, was politically motivated because she was running for councilor as an opposition candidate. Timothy Dwight Inquirer Central Luzon; Ami Arnaiz, Inquirer Visayas; and Alexis Hipa in Manila

Aquino sisters say brother won't tarnish parents' names

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—"I CAN STAKE my life on it. My brother will not tarnish our family name and avoid to suffer," Aurora Corazon "Pinky" Aquino Abellada said of her brother Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III.

Abellada and Maria Elena "Balby" Cruz, sisters of the Liberal Party presidential standard-bearer, were in Victorias City, Negros Occidental, on Sunday.

Abellada told reporters on Sunday that the Aquinos promised to get warm and enthusiastic welcome from people who are queuing their own money to put up headquarters around the country for their brother's campaign.

"They are telling us that they are helping because they want a better government and they have hope for change again with Noy running," she said.

"They tell us they were sad about the corruption and greed in the country and now losing hope. But when more (former President Corazon C.) Aquino[s] died, they were reminded of (the) memories of better days of clean government, which our brother represents," Abellada added.

Giving back

She said the Filipino people have given so much to her family that they wanted to give back what they could through service.

On the other hand, Cruz said they were not concerned over the administration's political machinery.

"I am not at all intimidated. I trust brother (that if God wants him (Benigno Aquino III) to be president, He will just put everything in place," she said.

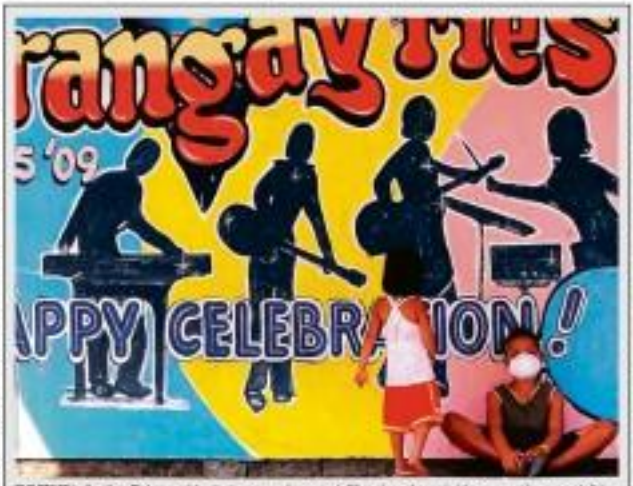
LP vice presidential hopeful Sen. Mar Roxas on Sunday said there was an ongoing demolition job against his team and its supporters, because they were always on top of the surveys.

Sowing plots

Roxas said the administration party was bent on destroying them, because they have the support of the people, citing results of several surveys by the Social Weather Stations.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) had tried to smear Bulacan Gov. Josefina Mendoza and Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca, who are supporting the candidacies of Aquino and Roxas.

Roxas, who was with the Aquinos in Negros on Sunday said he and Aquino have no bones



THE STAGE is all set for a Christmas celebration in an evacuation center in Albay where the provincial government hopes people living near Mayon would stay until the danger of an eruption passes.

Villagers lose sleep over Mayon, evacuation

LEGAZPI CITY—VILLAGERS near Mayon are losing sleep over two things—the volcano's continued rumbling and soldiers on patrol enforcing orders to forcibly move people out of harm's way.

Jacob Peral, 61, knows from a to z to spend sleepless nights.

His troubled look fell into her house in Barangay Malobago here to escape an evacuation center that was getting more crowded as Mayon kept sending signs of a major eruption.

Loud rumbling from the volcano kept her awake all night. It didn't help that the roof of her house shook each time.

At each rumbling, she would go out to look at Mayon, to "be glad has become overzealous," she said.

Evacuees, she said, must back into their homes now or inside the danger zones during the day to do these things—watch children, gather firewood and feed the animals.

Doreen Balmaceda, 3, was in Barangay Mabinit in Daraga town at dusk while the rest of the village sat empty like a ghost town after forced evacuations.

Teresita Bagadilla, 55, the boy's grandmother, said they spent the night in their house despite the danger because her grandson refused to use toilets at the evacuation center.

"Where the army were around last night, we turned our lights off for fear that they might force us to go back to the shelters," Bagadilla said.

She recalled seeing a neighbor, a jeepney, being carried away by soldiers.

Bagadilla said she and her grandson leave the evacuation center at 6 a.m. and return at 4 p.m.

On Monday, they stayed home but rumbling sound from Mayon kept her awake. It wounded, she said, "like voices chasing me awake."

The absence of a law forbids despite the raising of the alert level to 4, she said, was what worried her.

"There seems to be a black-

Execs linked to massacre ask court to lower bail

COMBIDO CITY—MAGUINDANAO's provincial administrator, two mayors and other local executives, who were accused of complicity in the massacre of 57 people on Nov. 23, have asked the regional trial court here to reduce their recommended bail of P150,000 each.

In a petition filed by their lawyers on Monday, they said the bail bond sought by the Department of Justice (DOJ) was exorbitant and that the amount must be lowered to P30,000.

Among those included in the charge sheet were Maguindanao administrator Norie Unas and Mayors Talib Ale of Pagalungan and Datu Unsay of Datu Odin Sinsuat town.

Reiterating their assurance to the prosecutors, the petitioners said they were willing to post bail but hoped that the court would reduce the bail amount.

"I cannot believe that I will be declared a rebel because in my entire life, I have never fought the government through force and armed uprising," Ale said.

Ales said he had yet to receive a subpoena or a warrant for his arrest.

Sinsuat said he was surprised to learn that he was among those charged, but added that he would not flee and would appear in court.

Judge Kadir Antao may decide on the petition for bail bond today, Jan. 7, according to Omarina Silongan, clerk of court.

The hearing was earlier scheduled this week but was reset because of the observance of Eid'l Fahrawan Day, a non-working holiday here and in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"At the moment, we are not yet ready to conduct the additional 15 counts of multiple murder cases filed by the justice department on Dec. 9 before RTC Branch 15 would also be conducted in Quezon City for consolidation," Silongan said.

Charlie C. Lobaton, Inquirer Mindanao

No Christmas break for 4,000 Mindanao troops

ZAMBOANGA CITY—AT LEAST 4,000 soldiers on peacekeeping duty in Sulu, Basilan and other areas of conflict in Western Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao won't be celebrating Christmas with their families.

"There is no Christmas break for our troops as they are considered in no-rest all key areas, cities and provinces," Brig. Gen. Ben Dolorfino, Western Mindanao Command chief, said on Tuesday.

Some of the troops have to continue running after kidnappers, jailbreakers and other criminals, including Abu Sayyaf bandits, Dolorfino said. "Those who are not directly involved in the military operations must remain in the barracks, he added.

"We cannot be remiss in our duties to protect the people," the officer said.

Six more battalions under the 1st Mainbrc Brigade have been dubbed to Basilan, two brigades to Sulu and a division to different areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula.

One of the freshly deployed soldiers, who identified himself only as Private Jun, said he would be separated to spend Christmas with his family in Bicol.

But with the forbidden of the Christmas break, he said he would call up his parents. Jobie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Sacks of suspected cocaine found in Eastern Samar

By Jaja Gubaira
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE PHILIPpine Drug Enforcement Agency in Eastern Visayas reported testing several sacks of suspected cocaine off Llorente town in Eastern Samar on Tuesday.

Mark Damazo, chief operations officer of the regional PDEA, said the haul was discovered by a fisherman.

He said, however, that tests have to be made to determine if the sacks contained cocaine.

Damazo said an unidentified fisherman found the sacks floating in the water.

The fisherman collected the sacks and brought them to Hilaro where he saw white crystalline substances in them.

The fisherman reported his find to police officials such authority of the suspicious sacks.

Damazo said if, indeed, the sacks contained cocaine, the drug could have been dropped off by a cargo ship in waters off the town that formed part of the Pacific Ocean.

Cocaine, he said, is not manufactured in the country.

Damazo could not say how many sacks containing the suspected cocaine were found by the fisherman.

Zambales solon says machinery prepared for Teodoro

By Gil Cabuenagan Jr.

A ZAMBALES CONGRESSMAN on has projected that the unmixed machinery of the Lakas-Kampi-CMD could deliver up to 10 million votes for presidential candidate Gilbert Teodoro as local officials remained loyal to the administration party.

Zambales Rep. Milagros "Mitos" Magsaysay, spokesperson of Teodoro's campaign, said local leaders, most of them incumbent mayors and governors, would be key to Teodoro's campaign for president.

"If one allies me address delivery around 10 percent, that would amount to about 6.3 million votes and around 10.8 million ballots if they are able to launch the 70 percent mark," said Magsaysay.

She said most incumbents of locals who are running for re-election—mayors, councilors and governors—filed their certificates of candidacies as members of the Lakas-Kampi-CMD coalition, which meant their loyalty stayed with the administration.

She said at least 70 percent of local officials are running as administration candidates and this could translate to more than 10 million votes.

"In the first phase, those who left the party had no choice. We didn't allow their votes anymore," said Magsaysay in a text message.

She said the new would be won at the local and grassroots levels.

"We are confident of winning ... because we have the best candidates and the best organization," Magsaysay said.

She said Teodoro has so far focused on informing the public about his platform of governance which includes modernizing the education system, improving government personnel skills, boosting research and technology funds, and widening healthcare coverage for more people.

Barca's Messi is Fifa World Player of the Year

ZURICH—LIONEL MESSI HAS WON THE FIFA WORLD PLAYER OF THE Year award for leading Barcelona to an unprecedented treble of Spanish and European titles. The 22-year-old Argentine beat 2008 winner Cristiano Ronaldo, 2007 winner Kaka, and his Barcelona teammates Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta in voting among national team captains and coaches. Messi won a Spanish League and Cup double and the European title last season. AP

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedras
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Pacman shots 'will ruin' Floyd's shoulder roll

By Roy Luarca

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.'S SHOOTING defense versus the shoulder roll may not be enough to withstand Manny Pacquiao's powerful shots when they clash in March, according to a San Francisco, California, orthopedic surgeon.

DR. ART LEE, who is also a boxing enthusiast and being its master, said in an article written by Ernesto Vergara of the Mabuhilan Times on Dec. 22, that Mayweather is in danger of having his left shoulder if he parries the Filipino superstar's heavy punches with it.

"Pacquiao's power shots are disarmingly Mayweather's infamous shoulder-rolling defense," Lee said.

Mayweather uses the shoulder roll with such skill and precision that very few boxers have managed to hit him hard, especially to the face, without getting punched back.

The American is still unbeaten in 40 fights and won his last by thoroughly dominating Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez in 12 rounds.

But while the shoulder roll has been effective against Marquez and Co., it may not work against the seven-time world champion Pacquiao, Lee said.

"Pacquiao's power shots are disarmingly Mayweather's infamous shoulder-rolling defense," Lee said. ... reasoning. Mayweather's previous fights, Lee said Pacquiao can easily pick-down Mayweather when they tangle on March 13 at 147 pounds, most likely at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The surgeon predicts Pacquiao will break Mayweather down in the first six rounds and then finish him off between the seventh and 11th rounds.

Kings raze 35-pt gap to win

CHICAGO—THE SACRAMENTO Kings produced the NBA's biggest comeback behind win in 13 years when they rallied back a 35-point deficit to beat the Chicago Bulls, 102-98, on Monday.

The Bulls led 79-44 with 6:01 remaining in the third quarter before being outscored 58-19 for the remainder of the game.

"It's awkward of to do what just happened," Sacramento coach Paul Westphal told reporters. "I'm not even sure I believe it, but it sure was fun."

Rookie Tyreke Evans scored nine of his 23 points in the final 2:13 as the Kings (13-14) rallied for the NBA's biggest comeback since the Utah Jazz overcame a 30-point deficit to beat the Denver Nuggets in 1998, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Other NBA results: Cleveland 111, Phoenix 109 (OT); Milwaukee 112, Indiana 104 (T); San Antonio 113, Memphis 93; Orlando 97, Detroit 86; Boston 92, Minnesota 83; Houston 107, Golden State 102; Portland 104, Oklahoma City 97; Denver 122, Utah 114; New Orleans 101, Toronto 97; Miami 103, Philadelphia 94; Los Angeles Lakers 99, New Jersey 91; Phoenix 107, Dallas 101; Sacramento 102, Chicago 98. Reuters, AP

Grant these Christmas wishes, Santa

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Little-known brother, appeared in my dream the other night.

We said that if I texted friends between the marginal hours of 10 a.m. and 12 noon of Tuesday, Dec. 22, asking them for three Christmas wishes, they may be granted.

Till the wisher needs to look. He doesn't need to be nice or good at heart—none of that stuff. My younger brother Santa gave me a password and if this is included in the texted wish, like magic it is granted!" declared Dyed Claus.

Needless to say, as the clock struck 12 the following day, I started texting friends as fast as I could. Here are three Christmas wishes, arranged in no particular order:

• **Wynne Arboleda,** *Barger King player*—My fervent wish is to be able to play in the PBA again because basketball is part of my life. And some magnanimous contributor up there to help my family to set mauayo. (Hopefully, my family will be happy together.)

• **Dante Tan,** *Stream Films captain*—To have a quiet, personal time with family and close friends. To have time to rest and play golf.

• **Bobby Vargas,** *Bulls 16-Tire governor*—HOW? Sir, how? ... Share po sa akin ha! Sir my personal wish, that it's to have more grandchildren and the time to spend with them. Professionally, (but) a sweet draw at ABF (Manny's Pangilinan) 'yun.

• **Sonny Barrios,** *PBA commissioner*—...May we all be devoted with Merlo, Inigo, Sean, Steven, Jacqueline—blessed, healthy and economically viable. (Ike Pacquiano).

• **Eddie Partosa,** *Ice Bulls basketball coach*...I'm wishing for good health for my family, especially for my son, Joel.

• **Alex Crisano,** *Barako Bull player*—...I'm asking Santa for a win. I'm tired of Bulldog Cebu.

• **Paulo Hubalde,** *Barako Bull player*—My wish is to win all our remaining games in the conference.

• **Lawrence Chongson,** *LP coach*—My wish is for a healthier and happier 2010, a better Philippines, and a UAAP victory for UE.

• **JB Baylon,** *PBA governor for Cebu*—...Pinoy pride and a spanking Bauble for the Cebu Tigers in the ongoing conference.

• **Enrico Villanueva,** *Ginebra singer*—I give my Christmas wish in advance. My baby girl was born last Nov. 28.

• **Magnum Membrere,** *Barako Bull player*—Power of mind and good health for my family.

• **Susan Papa,** *AUAP secretary general*—Good health so I will have the energy to continue my mission in swimming.

• **Patrick Gregorio,** *AUAP secretary general*—My wish is to have peace in Philippines, Mindanao in particular. (Bring my son, please.)

• **Tony Boy Reyes,** *former player*—My wish is to have continuous good health for me and all the people around me.

• **Raymond Tan,** *Barako Bull team owner*—Clean and honest 2010 elections.

• **Kenneth Duremdes,** *PBA referee/team governor for Coke*—(Wish, motorcycle racer Ulan (that we refer) against Sheldon on Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

• **Danny Espiritu,** *player*—Good health, good fortune and good books for the coming year.

Those wishes, including mine, have been forwarded to Santa Claus through his brother Dyed. I hope they contain the password.

Merry Christmas to all, including my enemies.

COCA-COLA'S Ayo Bueno (right) narrows Jeffrey Carlson of Alaska in Sunday's game won by the Tigers. ...

Texters target: Outright semis

Rain or Shine tackles Barako Bull

By Marc Reyes

TALK 'N TEXT SLUGS IT OUT WITH STA. LUCIA today, not only looking for a win to close out the year on a bright note, but to also make that one final push for outright qualification to the semifinals of the SFC-PBA Philippine Cup.

Game time is 7:30 p.m. at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The Texters are in third spot with a 9-4 card, close to three games behind the pace being set by idle Alaska and San Miguel Beer.

Making the semifinals outright is the primary goal for the team, but Bayer knows that with four games to go, things would all have to fall their way for that to happen.

Jared Gillespie is expected to miss another game for the Texters, who recently welcomed Jimmy Alapag back from a hamstring injury.

"Sta. Lucia is playing as well as any team in the league right now," said Bayer.

Meanwhile, Rain or Shine aims to endeavor to even-bid in the bottom half of the standings when the Elasto Painters clash with luckless Barako Bull in the 5 p.m. opener.

Rain or Shine will be looking to snap out of a three-game losing streak while sending the Energy Boosters a 10th straight loss and closer to elimination.

Talk 'N Text is coming off a gripping, 101-98 win over Purefoods in Cagayan de Oro City last Saturday while Sta. Lasa pulls up a second straight win last Dec. 16 at the expense of ex-rival clubbing Barangay Ginebra, 93-88.

Talk 'N Text beat Sta. Lucia in the first meeting between the two clubs in this tournament.

Lean and mean Team RP brings P80-M savings

By Jane Meneses

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISsion has millions of reasons to feel happy.

That's because, compared to its cash outlay for the country's participation in the 2007 Southeast Asian Games in Thailand, the government sports agency unveils a whopping P80 million savings to host and assist Team Philippines in the recent 25th SEA Games in Laos.

PSC chair Harry Angping said they spent P30 million for the Laos Games and P130 million for the Thailand stint.

The country fielded 620 athletes and competed in all but two of the 43 events in the biennial meet. Overall, Team RP finished third with 41 gold, 91 silver and 96 bronze medals.

In Laos, the country sent 251 athletes in 22 sports, harvesting 38 gold, 33 silver and 56 bronze medals to land fifth overall, just two golds shy of Malaysia (40-40-37) and a world of third-placer Indonesia (83-53-74).

Apart from improving on its 2007 ranking, the RP contingent in the 13-nation meet fared better based on the ultimate gold standard metric.

"The Iconoclastic1 results showed that sending more athletes doesn't necessarily lead to winning more medals," said Angping.

The PSC bankrolled the participation of 150 athletes while the Philippine Olympic Committee shouldered the expenses of the additional athletes.

Of the 38 gold medals bagged by RP spoor in Laos, only four were won by the POC-backed athletes.

Muaythai champions Eduardo Buscayno and Jun Jun Barayang as well as swimming gold medalists Marjorie Angara and Jason Salahid were not part of the PSC lineup.

"We will use the savings to form another pool of athletes for the Asian Games," said Angping, who is targeting eight to 10 gold medals in the basketball in November next year in Guangzhou, China.

Ex-world champ Zubiri, PSC take lead in promoting arnis

By Jane Meneses

THAILAND HAS MUAY, KOREA HAS TAEKwondo and Indonesia has pencak silat.

Now, the Philippines has joined their ranks after Republic Act No. 9850 was enacted recently making arnis, the martial arts of stick fighting, the country's national sport.

Authored by Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, the Act was signed by the President on Dec. 11 officially identifying the sport as indigenously Filipino.

Prior to its enactment, arnis expert is as popular in the Philippines as in other countries such as the United States and Russia.

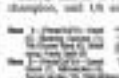
Zubiri, himself a former arnis world champion, said UN and Russian special forces have always trained in arnis.

"It saddens me that our own homegrown sport is more popular abroad," said Zubiri, the 1988 national champ and winner of the gold medal in the 1987 Congressional Cup in his weight class at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Zubiri has allocated P5 million as seed money to boost the popularity of the sport, with the Philippine Sports Commission taking the lead in the law's implementation.

"It shocks me to learn that the grand masters of the art live so poorly, whereas the foreigners they train to teach the sport abroad are well off because of the popularity of arnis overseas," Zubiri said in yesterday's press conference at the office of PSC chair Harry Angping.

BENEFITS Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri (left) and PSC chair Harry Angping brandish arnis sticks in yesterday's press conference. ...



Top Choice/Sta. Ana

Six Jr NBA campers making their mark

THE SIX TOP CAMPERS OF THE 2006-2009 JR NBA Philippines are making waves in elementary and high school leagues.

Gilbert Mark Jayson Tolle, Ace Gabrielle Anne Asero and Ashlee Marvin Holland Muller, Manila's Michael Jay Jovellana and Adrian Pagador, and Cagayan's Jane Carlo Bandalaria all went to the United States in April as part of their reward for topping the Jr NBA National Training Camp.

The six were given a chance to play with the Stew Jersey Jr NBA All-Star Team and to meet with NBA legend Jim Harper.

Incidentally, now plays for the San Sebastian Staglets Staglets, a student at Pinoy City South High School, is the ace center of the Jose Maid Light Boosters, while Tolle was named league MVP of Cebu's Cassell league.

Asero, Jovellana and Muller, both of Second Street School Ruby Eagles, are joining the National Basketball Training Camp 14-under division, along with Pagador, in January.

Muller's 13-year-old set Ace Jovellana plays in the Metro Manila Basketball League. Asero is 98 Pilot

San Juan cockfest stakes P1 million today

MORE THAN 80 FIGHTS ARE ON TAP IN THE "FIRST RUNNING OF S-COCK Derby at the San Juan Coliseum. A guaranteed prize of more than P1 million is at stake in the derby hosted by Rojong Hitman and Joel Pagan.

Meanwhile, 4 Kagsak-Del Rosario's 2K-Hadi Hay and L. Ramos d'Castle Cliff Farms topped P35-million Nationwide Rambolan S-Sing Derby last Saturday with perfect scores of nine wins each.

P2.1-M Makati 6-cock derby gets under way

9-6 LAST ELIMINATION ROUND OF 9-6 PCT.-MILLION "PAMALKING Makati" Derby at the Circle Cubao Coliseum. ... the Okada Coliseum with some 80 matches lined up. The finals is set on Dec. 30.

A big group of wale-incentive participants from the province bumps the field today, according to promoters Jun Orillaza, Rudy Salud and LSM group.

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Now you don't even have to carry cash while you shop!

MOON-LIT PATH
Moon-shaped lanterns light up the walkway at the Mullinos River Parks' Roman Garden, just a few meters away from President Village which was hard hit by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" several months ago.

Murder charges slapped vs Jaylo, 5 ex-PDEA men

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSman yesterday filed murder charges against former Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director Reynaldo Jaylo and five ex-agents for allegedly killing three men—one of them a fellow agent—in 2004.

In a complaint filed with the Sandiganbayan, the Ombudsman accused Jaylo and former PDEA agents Edgardo Castro, Joseph Bernabe, Cecilio Garcia, Alfredo Amarante and Alex Suntaso of killing another agent, Richard Elma, and drug suspects Federico Ochoa and Enrique Figueroa.

The case was based on a complaint initiated by the victims' relatives and the testimony of Sr. Insp. Felidon, also a former PDEA agent, who said he saw Jaylo shoot one of the victims.

Jaylo's Task Force Usisan earlier claimed that the victims were killed in a shootout following a drug operation in Binondo, Manila on Jan. 9, 2004, shortly after the agents had received a tip from President Macapagal-Arroyo herself, court records showed.

But in a television interview, Felidon confessed that what took place was a reboot.

He said that as a former PDEA agent, he was involved in Jaylo's counter-ops operations, including the one which took place on Jan. 9, 2004.

Felidon added that he decided to come forward since his conscience had been bothering him.

In his testimony to the Ombudsman, Felidon claimed that Jaylo's team arrested Elma and Figueroa after they sold drugs to Usisan undercover an a buyer.

Following the arrest, the agents allegedly asked Elma to get inside a car while they took Figueroa near a bridge.

It was Jaylo who shot Elma several times, Felidon said, while Castro and

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Gateway Mall • New All Mall • Farmers Plaza

LRT cuts short operations for holidays

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT Authority (LRTA) yesterday advised the public to hurry home on Dec. 24, 25 and 31 and on Jan. 1 to avoid being left behind by its overhead train systems which will cut short their operations by a few hours.

In a statement, the LRTA said that its LRT Line 1—which runs from Baclaran to Monumento—and LRT Line 2, which plies Recto to Santolan, will cease operations early as passenger traffic was expected to be light with people expected to stay at home.

"I advise people to go home early from their shopping because those who don't know about this change of schedule might get left behind," LRTA Administrator Melquiadales Feliciano said in an interview.

On Dec. 24 and 31, the last northbound trip of LRT Line 1 will be at 8 p.m., and 9:30 p.m. for the southbound trip.

For LRT Line 2, the last train from Santolan will leave at 8 p.m. while the last one from Recto will depart from the station at 8:30 p.m.

On Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, the last trains for both LRT Lines 1 and 2 will leave their stations at 9 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., respectively.

On regular days, LRT Line 1's last northbound trip is at 10:30 p.m. while the last southbound trip is at 11 p.m. for Line 2, the last trains leave the Santolan and Recto stations at 11 p.m. on weekdays.

Feliciano said the number of passengers riding on both lines has risen in the past weeks.

"It's really gone up, especially in stations near Mehaboly in Manila," he added.

According to him, as many as 340,000 people now ride on Line 1 daily up by 20,000 to 30,000.

On the other hand, daily passenger traffic has also gone up to 360,000 on Line 2, an increase of 20,000.

But on Christmas and New Year's Day, passenger traffic is expected to be light on both train systems. "Everyone just wants to stay home for the holidays," Feliciano said.

Peta: Be kind, go vegetarian

By Tina G. Santos

DON'T FORGET YOUR FURRY LITTLE friends this Christmas.

Apart from toys or vegetarian food treats, another present you can give your pets this holiday season is quality time, according to animal rights advocate People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta).

"Take your dogs to the park or lake there for long walks and be sure to let them stop and sniff the fire hydrants," suggested Ashley Peters, Peta campaign officer. "Or watch a movie with your cat on your lap or simply spend some time toasting around a toy for him or her."

But keeping your four-legged companions safe or making them part of the Noche Buena and Media Noche feasts would make them happier, she added in the appointed rs all Filipinos to be extra kind to animals this Yuletide season.

At the same time, Peta urged the public to reduce their meat consumption during the holidays, not just for health reasons but also out of compassion for animals who end up being slaughtered for food.

"This holiday season, we can extend peace and goodwill to animals by serving delicious, healthy and humane meatless feasts. Everything holiday joy to animals is really as simple as not eating them," Peters said as it urged the public to discover vegetarian meals for their holiday feast.

"Not only is going vegetarian the best thing you can do for animals, leading health experts agree that adopting a vegetarian diet is the best thing we can do for ourselves and our families," it stressed.

Likewise, Peta appealed to the public to refrain, if not totally forego, the use of use-splitting fireworks during the celebration to avoid scaring their pets.

WATERY CHRISTMAS

Santa Claus is flanked by his reindeer while diving inside a giant aquarium at the Manila Ocean Park near Rizal Park. NOY JAVIER

MMDA workers to get P7,000 bonus

By Nika Calleja

FOR THE MORE THAN 8,000 employees of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), this Christmas will truly be merry.

MMDA Chair Danny Lim yesterday announced recently that all of the agency's workers, including those hired on a per project basis, would each receive a cash bonus of P7,000.

The cash gift, which came from President Macapagal-Arroyo, will be given on Dec. 24.

As per the guidelines set by Malacañang, only permanent, casual, and contractual employees are entitled to the cash gift. However, in view of the agency, however, it ordered that all employees, including those on job order status, shall be given their fair share," Deputy Manager Robert Nacianceno said in a statement.

Nacianceno added that this was welcome news, considering that more than 60 percent of the agency's employees are on a per project status.

Half-naked 'hopia' maker nabbed for rape try on 13-year-old girl

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A MAN YESTERDAY DENIED accusations that he tried to rape a teenager but an angry mob ordered to believe him because when they caught him, he was naked from the waist down.

Richard Tangan, 22, a rice-in employee of a hopia factory on Onggin Street in Binondo, Manila, was beaten up by the neighbors of the 13-year-old girl.

Despite the standing he got, Tangan steadfastly denied the accusation against him.

His memory

"I only remember that I was really drunk and that I was beaten up," he said, adding that he did not know what he did or why he was rounded.

Tangan was later turned over to the custody of the Manila Police District (MPD) Binondo station 11.

MPD Station 11 commander Insp. Nelson Yabut said the rape attempt happened at around 2 a.m. yesterday in the victim's house in Binondo.

Tangan broke into the girl's house as the family were all asleep. He started kissing the young girl but a housemaid woke up and screamed, alerting the rapist who fled in the dark with his pants down.

Yabut said Tangan panicked and tried to escape. The maid blocked his path but the hopia maker punched her in the face and ran outside the house.

The maid's screams, however, woke up the rest of the household who chased after him.

Neighbors to the rescue

Their screams caused their neighbors who immediately ran after Tangan who, at this time, had already lost his pants.

The hopia maker was beaten up by the girl's neighbors before they turned him over to the police.

Yabut said Tangan would be charged before the city prosecutor's office with attempted rape. He also faces charges of physical injury for hitting the housemaid.

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MERALCO

Pasig City police deploy teams to stop cases of 'bukas kotse'

By DJ Yap

THE PASIG POLICE HAVE DEPLOYED TWO teams of plainclothes officers to parking lots around the Ortigas business district to prevent cases of "bukas kotse" (thieves who break into unattended vehicles).

City police chief, Senior Supt. Napoleon Villegas, said they were justifying more action to parking areas, especially open parking lots, during the busy holiday rush, when theft incidents reportedly rise.

"It's a basic system. We have two teams with seven members who patrol the parking lots. One team is in civilian clothes while the other team is in uniform," the chief said.

Villegas added that the parking lots of malls usually have their own security guards but open pay-parking areas were rarely strictly guarded.

He said those parking establishments usually have disclaimers about not being responsible for losses due to thefts "although it should be their responsibility since these are private property."

Contrary to popular belief, most "bukas kotse" thieves actually drive their own vehicles, usually vans or old sedans, Villegas said.

"They park near to their target and try to get close, making sure no one is inside. If the lone's alarm goes off, they back off, but if not, they do their thing," he said.

The loot varies from wallets and bags to cell phones and laptop computers, Villegas said.

Murder charges filed . . .

From page A 01

But aside that Esguerra.

One of the agents then instructed Diaz to carry the bodies but as Diaz approached the parents' body Garcia also shot him, Peñaloza added.

In their affidavits, Ayda and his agents categorically denied the allegations.

They said that Peñaloza's testimony was "nothing but a product of his demented imagination and those of his handlers or disorderly respondent Ayda and his Task Force."

They claimed that Peñaloza did not take part in the operation in question and that he had been accused of corruption and abuse of authority prompting Ayda to bar him from joining them in the field.

The respondents also cited the in-fighting within PDEA at that time, adding that Peñaloza was "being peddled" by a group which was out to discredit Ayda's camp.

Ayda and his agents instead maintained that what happened was a legitimate shootout.

They said that during the drug operation, they heard gunshots and saw Diaz wounded. They pushed to rescue their fellow agent, but the suspects shot them, too, prompting them to return fire.

Although Ollit and Esguerra noted negative for gunpowder burns, the respondents said "the same cannot be taken to mean that they did not engage the suspects in gunfights."

They also filed perjury charges against Peñaloza.

However, in its resolution, the Office of the Deputy Ombudsman for the Military and Other Law Enforcement Offices (MOLEO) found Peñaloza's statements to be credible and consistent.

"After a careful and judicious evaluation of the evidence presented in this case, we are of the opinion that what really transpired on that fateful day is actually a robust and not a legitimate buy-bust operation as claimed by the respondents," it said.

The Ombudsman, meanwhile, dismissed charges of planting of evidence against the respondents, saying "the record [was] devoid of evidence" on who among the respondents [had] actually planted the shabu were seized after the incident.

The Ombudsman's MOLEO approved the resolution in December 2008, but it was filed with the Sandiganbayan only yesterday, or about a year later.

DID YOU KNOW

TYPHOON Ibiza (Ondoy) damaged 348 schools in Metro Manila. This is about one-fourth the total number of schools damaged (1,382).

Cyril C. Bautista Inquirer Research

The WORLD

Editor Lamberto R. Glocoo

BOWED Pope Benedict XVI walks in the excavation site of the remains of the first dwelling in Nazareth, found there under the church built on the home of Jesus on Dec. 21. AP

China slams UK's claim it 'hijacked' climate talks

HELSINKI—CHINA CONDEMNED CLAIMS SECRETLY TO BRITAIN'S CLIMATE CHANGE minister that it had "hijacked"

negotiations in Copenhagen, saying on Tuesday that accusation was not an attempt to win diplomatic points but was untrue.

The sharp words from Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu were the latest barring of diplomatic bad blood after the talks in Copenhagen ended on Saturday with a broad, non-binding accord that fell short of hopes for a robust global agreement on how to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Jiang was responding to a report in Britain's Guardian newspaper that said the Environment Minister Ed Miliband had accused China, Sudan, Bolivia and other left-wing Latin American nations of "hijacking" efforts to reach deeper agreement on how to fight global warming.

In a separate commentary for the paper, Miliband said China wanted a weakly supported proposal at the Copenhagen talks to aim to cut global greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

"We cannot again allow negotiations on real points of substance to be hijacked," he also wrote, but without singling out China or any other country as a "hijacker." Chinese spokeswoman Jiang did not state Miliband by name, but Beijing's ire was clear.

"The statements from certain British politicians are plainly a political schemes," she said in a statement issued by the official Xinhua news agency.

"Their objective is to slash responsibilities that should be assumed toward developing countries, and to provoke discord among developing countries. This scheme will come to nothing." **The Top is unlikely to seriously disrupt** negotiations seeking to turn the Copenhagen accord into a legally binding treaty that the once exchange has underscored the distrust between China and rich countries that could threaten efforts to agree on that treaty by late 2010.

"Everyone is raising the banner of protecting the planet, but in reality they are protecting their own interests," Wang Yi, a climate change policy researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, told Reuters.

"The compromises (in Copenhagen) were very, very limited." China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases from human activities and its biggest developing economy. Other governments have pressed it to do more to reduce its growing emissions and to submit its emissions goals to international checks as part of any new climate pact.

But China and other big developing countries have accused the rich economies of failing to offer big enough cuts to their emissions, and of not offering enough money and technology to help poor countries to cope with climate change. Reuters

First Jesus-era house discovered in Nazareth

NAZARETH, ISRAEL—JUST IN time for Christmas, archaeologists on Monday unveiled what may have been the home of one of Jesus' childhood neighbors.

The humble dwelling in the first dating to the era of Jesus to be discovered in Nazareth, then a hamlet of around 50 impoverished Jewish families where Jesus spent his boyhood.

Archaeologists and present-day residents of Nazareth imagined Jesus as a youngster, playing with other children in the isolated village, not far from the spot where the Archangel Gabriel revealed to Mary that she would give birth to the boy.

Today the ornate basilica of the Annunciation marks that spot, and Nazareth is the largest Arab city in northern Israel, with almost 65,000 residents. Muslims now outnumber Christians two to one in the bustling, crowded city.

The archaeological find shows how different it was 2000 years ago. There were no Christians or Muslims; the Jewish Temple stood in Jerusalem and tiny Nazareth stood near a battleground between Roman rulers and Jewish guerrillas.

The home of Nazareth's big mercenary-fighting grooms in hide from Roman Israelis, said archaeologist Yardenna Alexander, excavations director at the Israel Antiquities Authority. But the burden was so far off the beaten path that the crews were apparently not involved, she said.

Based on clay and chalk shards found at the site, the dwelling appeared to house a "simple Jewish family," Alexander added.

"This may well have been a place that Jesus and his contemporaries were familiar with," Alexander said. A young Jesus may have played around the house with his cousins and friends. "It's a logical suggestion."

The discovery in effort to Christmas pleased local Christians.

"They say if the people do not speak, the stones will speak," said the Rev. Jack Kassis of the nearby basilica.

Archaeologist Stephen Pfann, president of the University of The Holy Land, noted: "It's the only witness that we have from that area that shows us what the walls and floors were like inside Nazareth in the first century."

Alexander said workers uncovered the first signs of the dwelling last summer, but it became clear only this month that it was contemporary from the days of Jesus.

Alexander's team found remains of a well, a hideout, a courtyard and a water system that appeared to collect water from the roof and supply it to the house. The discovery was made when bulldozers dug up the courtyard of a former structure to make room for a new Christian center, just yards from the Basilica.

It is not clear how big the dwelling is Alexander's team has uncovered about 900 square feet of the house, but it may have been for an extended family and could be much larger, she said. AP

US sets stiff fines on airlines for keeping travelers on planes

WASHINGTON—THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT will impose stiff penalties starting this spring on airlines that keep passengers waiting too long on planes without reaching them or letting them off for a time—a remedy that will relieve many travelers but means longer delays for a few.

The Obama administration took the strict new approach in response to several highly publicized events in recent years, and in the face of likely congressional action if airline regulators did not respond to the consumer outcry that ensued.

Under the rule, airlines that do not provide food and water after two hours or a chance to disembark after three hours will face penalties of $27,500 a passenger, Ray LaHood, the secretary of transportation, announced Monday.

In recent years, jetBlue's Blue Flights have been held on the ground for more than three hours—almost 1,500 a year, or roughly one out of 6,200 flights—but that has been enough to affect more than 100,000 passengers a year and to create substantial public resentment.

The administration's action does not require congressional approval. But the airlines predicted that the rule would create a new set of complications and might force them to put more breathing room into their schedules.

Others in the industry also suggested that some passengers would face inconvenience delays as airlines adjusted their practices to avoid the penalties, which could amount to millions of dollars for a violation on a single flight.

The rule, which applies only to domestic flights, is set to go into force in four months. Its effects will differ from airport to airport. Planes are sometimes held on the ground in Bass remember to accompanied airports because of a problem at the destination airport. AFP

Distracted teeners unfriend Facebook

FACEBOOK, THE POPULAR NETWORKING site, has 350 million members worldwide who, collectively spend 10 billion minutes there every day, checking in with friends, dishing through photos and generally keeping pace with the drift of their social world.

Make that 9.9 billion and change. Recently Hailey Lindstrom, 17, and Monica Reed, 16, juniors at San Francisco University High School, made a pact to help curb each other from the lure of the login. Their vision might as well now read, "I can't be bothered."

By mutual agreement, the two friends allow themselves to log on to Facebook only on the first Saturday of every month. "We decided we spend way too much time obsessing over Facebook and it would be better if we took a break from it," Hailey said.

The two are among the many teenagers, especially girls, who are recognizing the huge distraction Facebook presents, according to parents, teachers and the students themselves. Some teenagers, like Monica and Hailey, form support groups to enforce their Facebook hiatus. Others deactivate their accounts.

In October, Facebook reached 54.7 percent of people in the United States ages 12-17, up from 28.3 percent a year earlier, according to the Nielsen Co., the number research firm.

Facebook will not reveal how many users have deactivated entries, but Hadley Young, a psychologist who is the director of the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery in Bradford, Pa., said she had spoken with dozens of teenagers trying to break the Facebook habit.

"It's like any other addiction," Young said. "It's hard to wean yourself." NYT

WORLDBRIEFS

White House picks new cyber security coordinator

WASHINGTON—The White House has tapped a corporate cyber security expert and former Bush administration official to lead the effort to shore up the country's computer networks and better coordinate with companies that operate 85 percent of those critical systems. Howard A. Schmidt, a veteran eBay and Microsoft executive, will become the government's cyber security coordinator. AP

Family says Brittany Murphy was ill days before death

LOS ANGELES—Actress Brittany Murphy died of natural causes after becoming ill with flulike symptoms in the days before she collapsed in the bathroom of her Hollywood Hills home, Assistant Chief Coroner Ed Winter said on Monday. Murphy had been combated and officials were awaiting the results of toxicology and tissue testing before determining an official cause of death. The autopsy found no signs of trauma in the body of the 32-year-old star of "Clueless" and "8 Mile." Police did not suspect foul play. AP

MURPHY

LA court rejects freedom for director Roman Polanski

LOS ANGELES—In a case that has polarized public opinion, director Roman Polanski did not win his freedom Monday in a 32-year-old sex offense, but an appeals court said in a strongly worded opinion there was probable justice and prosecutorial misconduct in his case. The opinion suggested two legal options that could lead to his freedom now—the creation by the sentencing judge, or long-his sympathetic fight, or turn to the Judicial Branch and be sentenced in person, most likely, not resulting in additional jail time. AP

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Editor Raul G. Manuela ■ Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

S&P sees Asia-Pacific rebounding in 2010

Warns inflation, exit strategies remain critical

AFTER A DIFFICULT YEAR, THINGS ARE LOOKING UP for most Asia-Pacific economies, including the Philippines'.

Ratings firm Standard and Poor's said all its rated economies in the region were expected to post positive GDP growth in 2010.

However, it said concerns and challenges remain...inflation is an issue for some while the questions of when and how to exit from expansionary monetary and fiscal policies are critical for all.

S&P's new report, "Asia-Pacific Economic Outlook Q4 2009: Exit Strategies and Inflation are Main Issues for 2010 as Region Recovers," was written by Dharmakirti Joshi, director and principal economist of S&P unit CRISIL Ltd.

Joshi reviewed the quarterly performance of Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

"Although all economies are now performing better than expected, the nature of recovery varies across the region," Joshi said. "Policy focus is gradually shifting from managing the crisis to managing the ongoing recovery. A critical challenge for all economies is how and when to exit from expansionary monetary and fiscal policies in a way that sustains recovery. Most countries are likely to begin by exiting economy easing, then gradually withdraw fiscal stimulus."

The report identified which countries were likely to exit monetary easing first. "We need to look at how quickly economies are bridging output gaps and whether or not inflationary pressures are emerging. If we simply equate pre-crisis GDP growth rates with potential growth, then China, India, Indonesia, Australia, and Vietnam are close to achieving their potential. Of these, the central banks of Australia and Vietnam have already raised interest rates," Joshi said.

"Just as Asia-Pacific is leading the world in economic recovery, so too will it lead the exit strategy in our opinion, the coming year will see all Asia-Pacific economies adopt a tightening stance in one form or the other," he added.

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Oriental** Peninsula plans to venture into energy sector/B2

■ **BSP sees** Dec. inflation hitting 8-mo high/B8

Oriental Peninsula plans to venture into energy sector

By Amy R. Borja

ORIENTAL PENINSULA RESOURCES Group is set to foray into the power generation sector as it plans to acquire a 40 percent stake in Oriental Energy Power Generation Corp., which has an approved renewable energy service contract with the Department of Energy.

In a statement, Oriental Peninsula said the contracts would allow the company to build an 18-megawatt mini-hydro power plant in Aklan, a move that could help ease the worsening supply shortage in Panay.

Apart from its service contract, Oriental Energy has already secured the nod of Aklan's Sangguniang Panlalawigan for the power project, which will be operational by 2013.

According to Oriental Peninsula, its shareholders have already approved the company's plan to enter the power generation sector.

Oriental Peninsula chair and president Caroline Tanchay said the company decided to enter the renewable energy arena since it made good economic sense to go in to clean, sustainable energy to help lessen the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

To pave the way for the mining firm's purchase of a majority stake in Oriental Energy, Oriental Peninsula shareholders recently approved the change in the firm's primary purpose to include power generation and natural resources development.

In the same meeting, company executives briefed shareholders about the status of its Bulawan mining operations.

The company reported that roads, bridges, piers and other support infrastructure like offices and laboratories have been constructed. Mining equipment have also been purchased. However, the firm has yet to commence mining operations in Palawan until mutual prices climb to more profitable levels.

As this developed, Oriental Peninsula maintained that its subsidiary—Crimsonlei Mines and Development Corp.—remains the holder of a valid and subsisting Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) duly approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

It will be recalled that Crimsonlei is currently locked in a bitter battle with mining operator Hixtonia Nickels Corporation after its operating contract was terminated by Crimsonlei's predecessor, Olympic Mines and Development Corp. due to alleged environmental violations.

Buying 40% of renewable energy firm

Gokongwei firms hit SEC requirements

THE THREE LISTED FIRMS OF THE Gokongwei group of companies have defended its failure to submit several corporate governance reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission, saying the corporate regulator already had "sufficient data" about its policies and practices in this area.

Nonetheless, JG Summit Holdings Inc., Universal Robina Corp. and Robinsons Land Corp. yesterday submitted their respective corporate governance scorecards for 2009 to comply with the SEC's rules.

"While the company endeavors to comply with all circulars and regulations of the SEC, it strives to do so with due regard to the circumstances and the rationale behind such regulations," Gokongwei group compliance officer Theodoro Valdez said in three separate letters—one for each listed Gokongwei firm—to SEC director Justina Callangan.

Last last month, the SEC wrote the three Gokongwei firms asking them to explain why they failed to submit their 2009 corporate governance scorecards as required under the corporate regulator's rules.

Corporate governance scorecards are self-assessment forms where companies rate themselves according to their perceived compliance with best corporate practices like transparency and accountability. The scorecards are meant to help regulators and the investing public get a clearer picture about companies' policies regarding investors.

The Gokongwei firms told the SEC that it considered itself to have "adequately complied" with the SEC's requirements with its previous submissions. Jhaztin C. Limon

Stocks end lower

From page B1

The local currency traded at 46.652 to the dollar. There were only 43 gainers against 55 losers and 75 that were unchanged.

"The market continued to consolidate within the 3,000-3,050 point level mainly because there is not much news and even the upsurge in overseas markets failed to push us up," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings Inc.

"Most investors in the country may already be in the holiday mood," he said.

Top-traded SM Investments Corp. was unchanged at P525, as was Energy Development Corp. at P4.26.

SM Prime Holdings was up 1.83 percent at P5.00 while Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was up 0.77 percent at P2,000. AFP

SMC details Cospak buyout agreement

SAN MIGUEL CORP (SMC) will buy the acquisition of Sydney-based Cospak Group through a partial cash payment and Cospak's dependent on the company's performance over an 18-month period.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, San Miguel said that A$245.7 million—or about P7.41 billion under the prevailing exchange rate—was paid for the majority stake last week in the biggest packaging trading firm in the Australasian region.

"The balance of the purchase price for the shares sale is the amount of 9.9 million Australian dollars will be payable to San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Overseas Pte. Ltd. (SMYPL) through an 'earn out' scheme, based on the attainment by (Cospak's parent firm) ABI Investments of an agreed earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda level) for the period ending Dec. 31, 2009 and June 30, 2010," the company said.

The predetermined Ebitda payment made will determine how much San Miguel will pay ABI Investments to complete the sale.

SMYPL also subscribed to an additional 12.27 million shares in ABI Investments for A$3 million, giving San Miguel control over 55 percent of ABI Investments.

"The acquisition price by SMYPL was based on the enterprise value of the Cospak Group as determined with the assistance of external consultants," the company said.

San Miguel also told the bourse that its packaging unit had been supplying packaging materials to Cospak since the early 1990s.

SEC told, the acquisition will cost about A$59.6 million or P1.82 billion.

The acquisition marked the return of the diversified conglomerate to the Australasian continent for the first time since its divestment from premier beer brewer Joseph Burns & Sons and Australian dairy and juice manufacturer Dairy Farmers in late last year.

"SMYPL hopes to make the Cospak Group the vehicle for its Australasian and rapidly growing exports business," San Miguel said.

Cospak Pty Ltd., which is 100-percent shareholder-owned, operates largely in Australia and New Zealand but has trading outposts in South Africa and Italy. Combined with its manufacturing operations, the annual revenue of the Cospak Group stood A$320 million or about P9.16 billion.

It is a private company providing a comprehensive range of rigid and flexible packaging to the wine, beverage, food and pharmaceuticals industries. Jhaztin C. Limon

'Green' project in CDO eyed

By Amy R. Borja

EMLINAS INC. IS PITTING ITS the firm "green" two sustainable building complex in Cagayan de Oro, which is capable of generating part of its own electricity requirements for the buildings' common spaces.

In a briefing yesterday Filipinas chief executive Romulo Kintanar said it the building was designed to have energy-saving and energy-generating features as the two buildings will be equipped with solar panels on the roof tops.

Kintanar said the use of solar panels could help lower the electricity bill that will be charged to tenants for the use of the common areas and facilities such as the gym and ballroom, among others.

DISCLOSURES

Philippine Telephone Corp. has disclosed the buyback of 19,000 shares at P150 each. The buyback of 71,000 shares at P150 a share and the buyback of 27,000 shares at P149.50 a share, all with the company's share buyback program. It has also disclosed the buyback of 20,000 shares at P150 per share and the buyback of 20,000 shares at P150 each on Dec. 11 and the buyback of 15,000 shares at P150 per share and the buyback of 10,000 shares at P150 each on Dec. 22 in line with the company's share buyback program.

***

Vantage Equities Inc. has disclosed the buyback of 28,000 shares at P1.28 a share on Dec. 18 and the buyback of 1,600,000 shares at P1.30 each on Dec. 29, in line with the company's share buyback program.

***

Robinsons Land Corp. has disclosed the buyback of 1,000,000 shares at P23.76 each on Dec. 30, in line with the company's share buyback program.

***

The Board of Directors of Rockwell Land Corp. has confirmed on Dec. 18 the listing of Victor D. Machuca as first vice president and concurrently designated as Corporate Banking Group, effective Jan. 4, 2010.

***

The Board of Directors of San Miguel Brewery Inc. has declared on Dec. 18 the increase in number of directors from nine to 11. The Board also approved the appointment of Shinyemon Ishihara as the company's executive director.

***

The Board of Directors of Apex Mining Co., Inc. accepted the resignations of William Lichauco as chair of the Board and chief executive officer, effective Dec. 31. The Board also elected on Dec. 30 Carlos E. Palileo as director and chair of the Board and Hangchun S. Nazareth as director.

***

The Board of Directors of Metro Bank & Trust Co. accepted the resignations of Antonio A. Meloto, Hans T. Sy and Henry T. Sy, Jr. as directors of the company. They will be replaced by Gregory L. Domingo, Jose T. Sio and Lawrence C. Ong-Haan. Domingo was also appointed as vice chair of the Board of the Bank.

Compiled by Jhaztin Quesada, Inquirer Research

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE
As of December 31, 2009

CURRENCIES

Crony stock king resurfaces

A FORMER HEAD OF a government-financed institution during the Estrada administration has been spotted actively trading penny stocks in the local stock market, such as those of Lodestar Investment Holdings Corp., Atlantic Coast and Mt. Sharon Consolidated Resources and Hotel top list.

The ex-GFI chief/private trader was among those reported to have been involved in the trade of so-called "crony stocks."

He has apparently resurfaced in a big way—as private trader of speculative issues.

But the ex-GFI chief recently removed the mask of an influential stock broker, who left himself when the former allegedly dumped shares of a now-defunct management team the broker heads.

The disposal of the shares resulted in the free fall of the company's stock price this month.

According to insiders, the broker was an agent that he was a no-show in the annual stockholders' meeting of the said company—a dormant movement holding firm where the broker sits as president.

Plus the broker-trader is in his own game? Maybe just for his control. Davis C. Bondoc

Biz Buzz
By the staff

From one winner's bed to another?

CEBUE the country's emerging new talipot, Roberto V. Ongpin, be interested in Manila Mining Corp.?

This is what the market seems to be speculating on recently.

After cashing out of Philex Mining Corp.—and making a ton of money in the process, according to wags—MM is now said to be interested in putting his chips in another mining firm.

And what could be a more sensible plan than to invest in the with a mining claim that also spells out to that of Philex?

If this plan were to push through, the investment would mark RVO's return to the mining and oil exploration game. RVO also has interests in dealing Philex Co. Inc.

But there is also talk in the market that, if RVO were indeed interested in Manila Mining (and reasonds in general), it would only be to sell it at a premium in the future to someone who would want it more ... perhaps someone like Manuel V. Pangilinan of First Philippine Co.

Shades of déjà vu. Davis C. Bondoc

Buying low

SOME investors may not be giving GMA shares some serious thought, but not company chair Felipe L. Gozon.

Based on disclosures to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Gozon has been buying up shares of GMA, which is proof that he believes the company's shares are undervalued.

Gozon, whose ITC Management and Development Corp. owns close to 10 percent of the common shares of GMA Network Inc., says he is happy and willing to buy more shares from the open market because he believes there is much more potential for GMA shares, which yesterday closed at P7.76.

ITDM 7 shares have already swung from about P3.30 apiece at the start of the year to a high of P8.60 last September. But Gozon says that the prices still do not reflect the real value of the broadcasting network. Dino Arcos-Bernabe

Short-lived

AFTER barely three months of operation...Zest-Air is set to cancel flights between Cebu and Hong Kong, if permission routes are to be believed.

According to our source, the airline—which is owned by Zonic senior Ambassador Alfredo Yao—will cease its daily flights to the former British crown colony on Jan. 4, 2010.

The reasons were given for the cancellation of the regular service, but it may be due, in part, to the slowdown in airline travel brought about by the global economic crisis.

In addition, fewer people seem to be willing to make the trek all the way to Clark nowadays (especially with the bullish Subic-Clark Interchange Toll Co.), given the proliferation of budget flights to Hong Kong from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

It remains unclear where Zest Air will use its leased Airbus A320 that will be freed up by the cancellation of the Clark-Hong Kong service.

Ambassador Yao, for his part, said that the plans for more operations is "still under study." Dennis L. Lanao

Christmas M&A

AROUND this time last year, the Gotianun family's East West Bank was busy finalizing a deal to acquire ABN's Philippine banking unit.

This time, it is Lyons Henry Sy's Banco de Oro Unibank and Equitable Banking Bank that are working on the arms-length valuation of assets).

Starting Monday, BDO may be able to finalize its acquisition of EBN assets and liabilities, it is said.

No, deal-making doesn't stop over in the season of parties. Davis C. Bondoc

Firms back out of bid for gold rush lot

EXXON RUN PHILIPPINE MINING DEVELOPMENT Corp. (PMDC) has declared a failure of bidding for a lot at the gold rush site of Mt. Diwalwal in Compostela Valley.

"Not one of the prequalified bidders submitted a bid," PMDC bids and awards committee (BAC) chairperson lawyer Janine T. Viola-Rebong said in a text message.

Dr. Viola said prospective bidders did not reveal why they backed out of the sale.

The prequalified bidders were publicly listed as Altus Consolidated Mining & Development Corp. and private company El Cruz R Co.

In order was a joint operating contract with the government-owned and -controlled corporation.

In November, three companies applied for a chance to bid for the Lot 5 property at the Mt. Diwalwal mineral reserve area spelled by PMDC.

The 1,296-hectare Lot 5 parcel is located in the Mindanao municipality. It is the second of three mining investment areas in the 8,100-hectare Mt. Diwalwal mineral reservation.

Only Altus and TSP Cruz passed the initial screening.

Rio Claro International Corp., an SAA contractor for infrastructure projects, was declared disqualified. It was not yet operating in mining. The company can only build areas now needed to operate mines, such as roads.

Altus is a mining firm registered with the Philippine Stock Exchange.

El Cruz, a construction-resource company, is also into mining. It had earlier made arrangements with conglomerate Metro Pacific to help develop their Tubal Mining Area. Nikko T. Dizon

RP buys below rice tender volume

San Miguel raises ₱7.3B via sale of preferred shares

By Dawn L. Lucas

SAN MIGUEL CORP. HAS FURTHER built up its war chest for corporate acquisitions as it raised a fresh batch of funds through a sale of preferred shares.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, San Miguel said that it raised ₱7.3 billion via its newly issued "series 1" preferred shares, which were sold yesterday through a private placement.

San Miguel issued a total of 97.2 million preferred shares which were sold to "not more than 19 buyers"—the maximum number of buyers whose mandatorily exempt tax need not be registered with regulators...at a price of ₱75 apiece.

A source familiar with the transaction said the firms was bought mainly by banks, their trust departments, and leasing and finance firms, all of which were attracted by the stock's high yield.

San Miguel's preferred shares have an annual yield of 8 percent, which is higher than the average yield of the firm's common shares in recent years.

At a price of ₱75 apiece, SMC preferred shares will give investors an annual return of ₱6 a share, compared to the ₱1.40 a share dividend rate for common shares.

The preferred share issue is part of a larger move to give shareholders the option of holding either SMC common stocks and preferred shares in any potential share price appreciation, or hold preferred shares which offer high, guaranteed annual yield.

San Miguel's foodmaker Asia's largest food and beverage conglomerate earlier approved the preferred shares plan to appease shareholders, who may be worried about the firm's aggressive diversification plans.

The other day, SMC teaming and Finance Inc., a unit of the Yuchengco Group of Companies, revealed that it bought ₱1.2 billion worth of San Miguel preferred shares.

"This is a good long-term investment in a strong company," said SMC Chairman and President Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. of investors, whose firm also served as joint underwriter for the issue.

The government, which owns a 24-percent equivalent block in San Miguel, also has opted to avail of the conversion to preferred shares as an intervention parcel to placate private investors. ⊙

High prices prevent world's top rice buyer from acquiring original stock

By Rita T. Gichambre

HIGHER RICE PRICES HAVE pushed the government to lower the volume of grain it plans to buy abroad.

In its tender on Dec. 8, the third of four rice importations for 2010 supply the government originally sought 600,000 tons of rice. The National Food Authority (NFA), which conducts the auctions, yesterday awarded only 479,252.70 metric tons out of the tender volume.

The NFA is importing 240,252.70 tons from Vietnam Southern Food Corporation (Vinafood1) at $618.39 to $692.50 a ton (1,000,000 tons at $618.39; 180,000 tons at $689.75; and the balance at $692.50).

The grains authority is buying an additional 125,000 tons from Thailand International Asia Pte Ltd., at $695.58 and 100,000 tons from Dimerco International Corp. at $688.58.

This is the second rice tender for 2010 supply where high prices have forced the grains authority to buy below the tender volume due to high prices and a budget constraint.

In its tender on Dec. 1, the NFA awarded contracts for the supply of 300,000 tons at a price range of $598 to $610 per ton. The original volume tendered was also 600,000 tons.

The NFA budget for each of the Dec. 1 and 8 tenders was P15.26 billion.

On Nov. 4, the NFA bid out supply for 250,000 tons of the cereal and awarded the contracts to the bid winners at $488.58 and $460 a ton.

In its fourth tender on Dec. 21, the government raised its budget to P18.325 billion from P15.26 billion, saying that rice prices had increased.

The Philippines, considered to be the world's top importer of rice, imports about 18 percent of its grain requirements. It bought 2.4 million tons of rice from abroad in 2008 and 1.775 million tons in 2009.

NFA Administrator Lourdes G. Nayona said the rice imports for 2010 supply was needed to offset storm-related crop damage during the main harvest season.

According to estimates from the Department of Agriculture, the country's last major 1.3 million tons of palay (unmilled rice) or an equivalent of 850,000 tons of white rice.

Because of this, the government decided to hold early tenders for a total of 2.05 million tons of rice out of the target ceiling of 2.4 million tons for 2010.

ERC allows Apocemco to sell power

By Amy S. Barros

THE ENERGY REGULATORY Commission has allowed Apo Cement Corp. (Apocemco) to operate as an independent power producer, enabling it to augment the power supply of the Mindanao Grid's Visayas District Co.

PHI's ERC's issuance of a certificate of compliance (COC). Apocemco will operate as an "embedded generator" as its generating units are directly connected to a distribution utility system.

The power plants of Apocemco consist of six diesel engine generating sets with a combined installed capacity of 47.20 megawatts (MW) and a 270-filament (MW) emergency diesel generating set, all of which are in Tisa, Cebu City, Cebu.

"Apocemco will augment the power supply of Visayas once their power supply agreement is finalized," the ERC said.

"This is a positive development for the Visayas grid since it is experiencing a power shortage. The ERC also has to make sure that only qualified entities are allowed to operate so that a stable supply of quality electricity enters the grid and at the most affordable cost to consumers," said ERC chair Lourdes G. Geronimo.

Companies like Apocemco have to secure a COC before they can begin commercial operations. It is a document or instrument that must authorized, financial and environmental standards.

The cement company was earlier issued a COC by the ERC to operate as a self generator on Leyte (SGL).

Apocemco was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in December 1961. It is primarily engaged in the operation, manufacture, development and marketing of cement, limestone and allied products.

The company is also authorized by the SEC to generate, supply and sell its power output to third parties.

Second from left: Mr. Rodrigo C. Rivera, Sr., CEO of RIZ Group of Companies, receives the BOI Outregion Award from BTI Undersecretary & BOI Managing Head Elmer C. Hernandez. Governor Gerry Ejo, Ara and Governor Francis Ferrer, Board of Governors of BOI, also joined the ceremony

SSS, Netopia facilitate pension services

By Bernie W. Dominguez

THE SOCIAL SECURITY System has teamed up with Internet early check Netopia to facilitate members' and employers' access to the pension fund's Web-based services and counseling to SSS president Romulo Neri.

In January, SSS members may start getting discounts of up to 25 percent on the P40 to P50 hourly fee at Netopia via their notification services and download of hi-tin, Neri said.

"We understand that many of our members lack cars and affordable access to the Internet," Neri said. Our partnership with Netopia will allow them to check their SSS payments, verify loan eligibility and enjoy other SSS services in our website."

Netopia has some 140 branches in strategic locations all over the country.

Neri said the partnership with Netopia is part of the pension fund's efforts to improve its electronic service facilities and speed up transactions.

According to Neri, the investments in the workload by manual processing of transactions is needed considering that the SSS membership base continues to grow. The pensioner fund covers private sector employees and employees, domestic helpers, self-employed readers and migrant workers.

"We aim to maximize technology to make SSS transactions faster, easier and more convenient, and this will include enhancing the SSS website," Neri said.

SSS also plans to expand features of its website to include filing of loans and benefit claims, he added.

For December alone, SSS released P8.7 billion in SSS pensions' bonuses and monthly pensions for some 340,000 retirees.

SSS also provides monthly benefits for partial and total disability, retirement and death.

14 December 2009. Celebrating its 42nd Anniversary, the Philippine Board of Investments, the lead agency of the government in promoting investments in the country, bestowed 100 selected BOI-registered companies its inaugural OUTREGION AWARDS Recognition Awards.

Outregion is an old Filipino word that literally means "the rest of Luzon." It is considered as the rice and coconut granary of the pre-Hispanic era. Thus, the Outregion Awards, or oryanos, becomes apt in honoring companies that had immensely contributed by way of investments and operations to the growth, stability and development of trade and commerce in the Philippines.

The awardees were standouts in terms of capital growth, revenues and employment, and their individual corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda - which made the difference in the selection criteria.

RIZ Group of Companies, a global conglomerate based in General Santos City, South Cotabato, was among the three (3) companies awarded the Outregion Awards. From being a pawnshop in 1976 in General Santos City, the RIZ Group evolved into a multi-faceted company that steadily grown into six subsidiaries and major divisions engaged in Farming, Agri-business, Manufacturing, Processing, Banking, Financing, Insurance, Real Estate Development, Hotels, and, Retailing of Hardware and Fishing Supplies. From operating mainly in the Philippines, it has made its mark in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

Recognizing that employees rank on its employees, RIZ Group instituted its Corporate Employee Rewards and Recognition System along with its responsible Corporate Governance that promotes transparency and performance to business standards, executes control, compliance, and risk management and utilizes appropriate technology as a catalyst of improving business operations.

The RIZ Group likewise pursued advocacy programs through its "HELP-EDDY" activities focusing on Health, Education, Livelihood, Peace & Development, Environmental Advocacies, Cultural Development, and Outreach Programs focusing on areas where its companies operate and in some conflict areas around the Barangays province. It also undertook ocean cleanup projects in Papua New Guinea.

BUSINESS

BSP sees Dec. inflation hitting 8-month high

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas said inflation in December might hit 3.9 percent or 4.6 percent due to the rise in demand for consumer products during the holidays.

The projected increase will be the fastest in eight months. In April, inflation reached 4.8 percent.

"The expected uptick in December [inflation] is due to increased demand for certain food items," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said in a text message to reporters.

The increase in consumer prices can only accelerate in December because of Christmas spending, economists said. Restrictions from Filipinos based overseas which also rise in the fourth quarter, fuel consumption and spending during the holidays.

The projected inflation for December will bring the average rate for the full year to a range of 3.2 to 3.3 percent, which is well within the 2.9-4.5 percent target of the central bank.

Tetangco said that despite the expected acceleration in the turnover in consumer prices in December, **the overall inflation environment** was seen to remain benign.

With the rate seen falling within the official target for 2009, the BSP sees no need to adjust its current monetary policy.

The central bank has set its inflation target for 2010 at a range of 3.5 to 5.5 percent, and at 2 to 4 percent for 2011.

"Over the next two years, inflation is expected to fall below the middle of the respective target ranges," the BSP chief said.

Tetangco said the favorable inflation outlook for the new two years will allow the BSP to keep its policy stance accommodative. The means its key interest rates can be kept at current low levels.

The BSP implemented a series of interest rate cuts from December last year to July this year to influence banks to reduce their own lending rates and, therefore, to encourage borrowings. Monetary officials said borrowings should support consumption and investments.

The BSP's overnight borrowing and lending rates now stand at record lows of 4 and 6 percent.

Because it spurs borrowings and consumption, low interest rates tend to accelerate inflation. The BSP said a faster rise in economic prices was alright provided it would ensure robust the target.

The BSP, according to Tetangco, does not see any need to reverse its monetary stance at the moment, agreeing that raising interest rates at this time may be counterproductive.

Monetary officials said the low interest rate environment helped the economy escape recession this year. While neighboring economies contracted this year, the Philippines grew 0.7 percent in the first three quarters.

The government expects the Philippines to grow by 0.8 percent for the entire year, the lowest of the official target range of 0.8 to 1.6 percent.

Full-year rate within target

Shell contests new ruling on ₱7-B tax row

By Jerry E. Esmo

PILIPINAS SHELL PETROLEUM Corp. Yesterday said it would contest before the courts the recent ruling of the Bureau of Internal Revenue requiring the oil refiner to pay ₱7.3 billion in excise taxes on its fuel imports.

The BIR's decision requiring an oil refiner to pay taxes for its unleaded gasoline (UGD) and light catalytic cracked gasoline (LCCG) importation runs counter to a series of rulings issued since 2004, which exempted from excise taxes all importation of raw materials used to produce unleaded premium gasoline.

"The timing of the reversal clearly points to an attempt to **save the gasoline dollar in the Bureau of Customs' legal position,"** said Shell legal counsel and former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, in a statement.

"Beyond the immediate shock to our economy this flip-flopping of the BIR results in an unpredictable regulatory environment that scares away foreign investments. This is the last thing we need in the face of a global recession," added Marcelo.

The BIR came out with its new position after Shell filed a case before the Court of Tax Appeals, questioning the jurisdiction of the BOC to slap Shell with a ₱7.3-billion deficiency **tax assessment on its CCG and LCC importation.**

Shell had argued that gasoline taxes were internal revenue taxes. It was the BIR and not the BOC that has jurisdiction over the issue.

Under three previous concurrences, the BIR maintained that Shell did not have to pay the excise taxes due the BOC **waived the oil firm to pay.**

The latest BIR position also contradicted the findings of the Department of Energy in 2003 and 2009 that imported CCG and LCCG were raw materials used by Shell for the production of unleaded gasoline.

Meanwhile amid the DOE's findings should be given greater weight since it was the agency that had expertise on the issue.

Newly appointed Revenue Commissioner Joel Tan Torres explained that the reversal of the agency's position was based on certain factual findings of the BOC that were not previously disclosed by Shell.

In response, Shell cited a 2009 BOC investigation report that found no evidence it Shell was selling CCG and LCCG to the public to refute the claim of misrepresentation.

Gov't to lower BIR 2010 revenue goal

By Reuend W. Dherings

WITH MORE "REVENUE-enabling" laws taking effect next year, government economic managers are considering lowering the Bureau of Internal Revenue's collection target for 2010 by as much as ₱70 billion.

According to Revenue Commissioner Joel L. Tan Torres, the "revolving" new target is somewhere in the range of ₱800 billion to ₱850 billion from the original program of ₱875.1 billion.

"There are initial talks about this in all levels of the DBCC [Development and Budget Coordination Committee], the Department of Finance and the Bureau," Tan Torres said. "The consensus is to lower the target."

Latest data from the BIR, an agency attached to the DOF, show that its collection has fallen short by ₱56.5 billion of its target for the 11 months to November. In that period, the BIR raised ₱681.9 billion.

Tan Torres said that among the factors that would affect tax revenue were those related to the personal equity investment account, real estate investment trust, taxation, cooperative development, and a general tax exemption of the Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-Ibig Fund.

"We have already identified a lot of strategies and measures that will ensure we will meet our tax collection goal next year," he added.

The BIR chief said that the lowering of the collection target would also be due to the government's reduced macroeconomic assumptions **as well as the existing tax perks** granted by the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

Peza '09 investment registration up 13.3%

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC Zone Authority posted a 13.3-percent growth in approved investments in 2009, surpassing its target for the year of 10 percent.

Data from Peza showed that the number of approved projects for the year reached 302, 2.14 percent lower than the 315 last year.

In terms of value, however, that of the approved projects for the year was 13.3 percent better at about ₱175.4 billion from ₱154.8 billion last year.

Projected exports as a result of these investments amounted to $11.3 billion, up 118.56 percent from the $5.3 billion registered in the previous year.

The only target that Peza missed for the year was that on employment generation. Peza director general Lilia de Lima said in a briefing yesterday.

This year's approved projects were projected to generate 79,420 jobs, lower than the 82,333 jobs created last year. This represented a year-on-year decline of 3.27 percent. Peza said it projected a 5-percent increase.

Most investments were still in electronics, said de Lima.

The biggest investment project approved for the year, however, was in relocating Taguig-based Camp's metal printing ventures in Bataan and Cavite.

For next year, she said Peza was aiming at a 13-percent increase in investments to about P200 billion.

Manufacturing and electronics would continue to drive Peza investments in 2010, she said.

MORESCO-1

INVITATION TO BID

The Missionary Electric - 1 Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc. (MORESCO-1) through the Pre-Qualification, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC) is inviting interested prospective bidders to submit bid proposals for the procurement of the following:

	EQUIPMENTS / SUPPLY / MATERIALS	QTY. AND UNIT		TOTAL Approved Budget Cost	BID Document Fee
A	Electrical Transformer 37.5 kva, 7.62-1	2 Pcs.	P	1,200,000.00	
B	Electrical Transformer 75 kva, 7.62-1	1 Pcs.	P	1,300,000.00	PHP 2,000.00
C	Electrical Transformer 100kva, 7.62-1	1 Pcs.	P	1,500,000.00	
D	Electrical Transformer 250kva, 7.62-1	1 Pcs.	P	2,500,000.00	
E	Conductor ACSR Dog, 336.4MCM	5 Pcs.	P	500,000.00	

Name of Institution: MORESCO-1
Procurement Method: Competitive Bidding

Bids higher than the stipulated ABC shall be outright rejected.

Bidding Documents may be purchased starting January 4, 2010 by an interested bidder upon submission of a letter of intent addressed and upon payment of a non-refundable fee per bid item, as indicated above.

A PRE-BID CONFERENCE shall be held on January 11, 2010, 10AM at the MT-DTC Board Room, MORESCO-1 Lapulapuan, Maasin, Oriental.

The technical and financial proposals, in separate sealed envelopes, duly marked as such will be received by the PBAC only at the MT-DTC Board Room on or before 10:00 a.m. on the morning of January 25, 2010. The BID OPENING, at which time you or your duly authorized representative are invited, shall immediately commence thereafter.

All bids submitted must be accompanied by a bid security in cash or cashier's check, in the amount equivalent to 2.5% of the amount of bid. The bid shall be valid for at least 120 days counting from the date of bid opening.

The MORESCO-1 hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids without incurring any liability, to declare one with more failure of bidders thereto and to accept such bid which is the MOST RESPONSIVE and considered MOST ADVANTAGEOUS to the Electric Cooperative.

(Sgd.) FERDINAND V. JAPSAY, C.E.S.E.
Chairman, PBAC

(7th Insertion 01 JAN)

MOTORING

E-mail: jo_motoring@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Joey N. Arcaro

Wet and wild year

By Alex Uy
Contributor

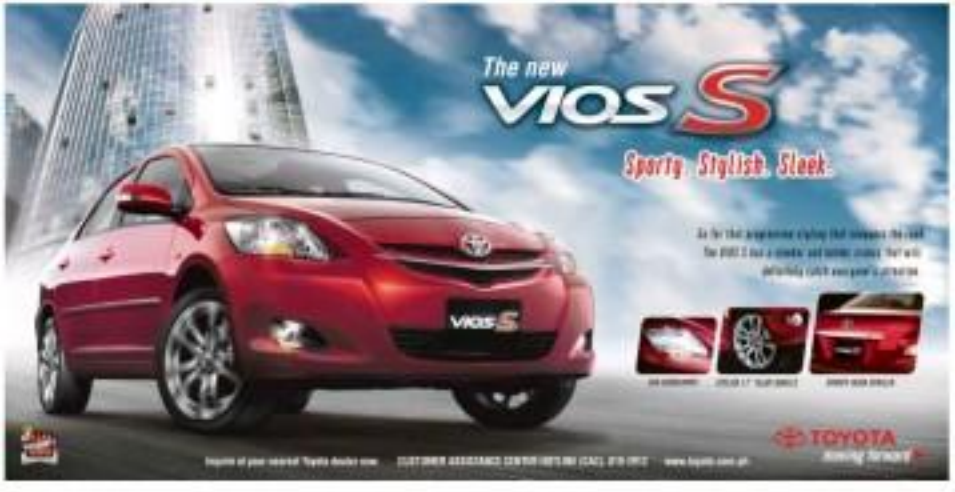
AS WE BEGIN TO LOOK BACK IN 2009, the auto industry has been through a lot. We started the year in January with a gloomy outlook, fearing global recession and political uncertainty in the following election year, not to mention a tsunami-like flood that crippled a big part of Luzon. It would have been described as a miracle if we just survived 2009. But why are most of the automakers and distributors still smiling? Let's sum up the year that was.

January

Undaunted by the looming recession, the start of the year saw Isuzu Manila launch five new models—RODEO, RODEO, D-MAX, I-MAX and I-SUV3, while Mercedes-Benz launched the GLK. This month also saw the launch of the all-new and very practical Honda City. Dealer-conscious boasting to us themselves for fuel-efficient countdown explained the whole for its bigger engine although. Whether you come Ching Jabbonni though, this car was really good looking!

February

The month of love saw the launch of the surprisingly affordable "darn" car, the Hyundai Genesis Coupe. This car is by no means a production, recently, drift race driver Rhys Millen broke the Guinness World Record in Pike's Peak using this Genesis coupe. The new larger Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer EL, Ford Explorer Eddie Bauer and Ford Clubwagon were also introduced in the market. Untimely? Well, if you asked Ford, they enjoyed an increase of 21 percent for the past five months compared to the same period last year. Aston Carmakers Corporation also formally taken over the BMW distributorship in the



Campi challenges Presidential wannabes

PEOPLE SAY THAT EVERYTHING IN THIS country boils down to politics. At a recent media briefing, Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines, Inc. (Campi) president Elizabeth H. Lee sort of played politics when she called on "those who seek the highest office of the land to include the auto industry as a whole in their plans for a better Philippines."

You see, well as Ms Lee must have noticed that when presidential wannabes speak up during their campaign stories, they hardly if ever mention any plans for the auto industry although it plays a major role in the economic growth of the country. As Ms Lee pointed out, "How that the auto industry grows cars and will allow the growth of upstream industries as well as downstream industries to include IT, power, energy, repair services, aftermarket services, among other retail businesses. Indeed, in automotive. The sum of total jobs in the Philippine economy that are related to the auto industry—from assembly, manufacturer, to include the parts and components industry, to the sales of vehicles down the line—is considerable."

Although the auto industry is not exactly dying since GMSP foresees a 2.3 percent growth this year with more than 127,000 unit sales nationwide, that 127,000 figure is pathetic compared to its domestic annual sales of 430,000 vehicles and Malaysia's and Thailand's 500,000 vehicles each. Vietnam, which used to lag behind us, now sells the same volume as we do and may soon overtake us, Ms Lee claims.

STUNTED. You don't have to be an MBA graduate to know what stunted and continues to stunt the growth of the formal auto industry. In 2003, when Executive Order 156 banning the importation of used cars was issued, total sales had already reached over 198,000 units. But don't think that the industry had reached ahead of time its goal to sell 200,000 units (the target year was 2008) because of those 198,000 vehicles, only 42 percent were brand new units.

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

Car smuggling peaked in 2004, when the informal sector sold almost 130,000 units while the formal sector sold only 88,000

Ms Lee says that car smuggling peaked in 2004, when the informal sector sold almost 130,000 units while the formal sector sold only 88,000—meaning that 60 percent of total new car registrations came from the informal sector.

If the ban on used car imports was fully implemented since 2002 when EO 156 was issued, Ms Lee says, the Philippine auto industry could have been a major player by now as an alternative source for increased investments in completely knocked down (CKD) assembly which currently employs 37,000 assembly, parts and components workers.

RECOVERING. The CAMPI head, who is concurrently executive vice-president of Universal Motors Corporation, contends that our auto industry could have begun recovering from the 1997 Asian financial crisis as early as the year 2000, about the same time that the other ASEAN countries were recovering. Before the crisis hit in 1997, the auto industry sold 362,000 units in 1996. Now, 11 years later, we are down to 127,000, thanks to the influx of used cars through Subic, Cebu and Port Irene in Cagayan,—years of many that Ms Lee did not mention but almost everyone knows about.

No wonder the Philippine car market is not taken seriously by automotive assembly investors. Ms Lee observes. "Sure we quite a significant domestic market so this can result in economies of scale. For instance, 200,000 in annual sales is the magic number. True, total sales volume has steadily grown through the years, especially when the Supreme Court upheld the late 1980s Bentley in 2007. But the growth is not enough as the highest sales in 1996 of over 362,000 units has yet to be surpassed. And the growth rate is sluggish compared to our ASEAN neighbors who, incidentally, don't allow the importation of used cars.

Strictly and fully implementing the ban on used car imports, Ms Lee stresses, would have an immediate, positive impact on the competitiveness of the Philippine auto industry. The kiss-off the benefits of full implementation: 1) immediacy because the ban does not have to go through the legislative mill; 2) increased sales, as prospective buyers of vehicles from the informal market would balk if such vehicles cannot be registered; 3) localization as outside CKD operations as well as increase investments thereto since the requirement for a larger, significant domestic market can be properly addressed.

If the Philippine auto industry is to be taken seriously as a strong contender for future investments as well as a true player in the region, Ms Lee concludes, we must grow the domestic market the fastest, fastest way possible. And the fastest way is to fully and strictly enforce the used-car imports ban. The ball is in the court of the said President, whoever that may be.

MOTORSCOPE

DEALER Principal Anthony Cheng (third from right) is joined by (from left, Ford Group Philippines Zone Manager Noel Bundalian, Fleet and Training Manager Julie Ann Tolosa, AVP for Dealer Development-Business Centers, VP for Marketing and Sales Steven Tan, VP for Customer Service Operations Dave Manzanilla and AVP for Ford Sales Glen Dasig.

Cheng Group opens Ford SM Marilao

THE CHENG GROUP opens their much-awaited Ford mall outlet showroom in SM Marilao, Bulacan, giving Bulacanos another thing to be truly excited about. With 80 square meters of prime space located near the Activity Center at the North entrance of the mall, Ford SM Marilao led by dealer principal Anthony Cheng and general sales manager Francis Ang Cruz caters to the growing demand of Ford vehicles in Bulacan and its nearby vicinity. "To better isolate our sales commitment and further gain a stronger presence in the local market, we continue to strengthen ties with our dealer network and expand our representation by establishing new dealerships and showrooms in key growth areas, to bring our high quality Ford vehicles and service closer to our customers. This is in line with our plans and we would like to congratulate the ANC Group for the successful opening of Ford SM Marilao," said Ford Group Philippines President Ron Baker. Ford continues to impress car-loving Filipinos by being one of the freshest lineups of new products in the country, delivering a robust sales performance in 2006. Cumulative sales of Ford vehicles were more than 10 percent from September, powered by strong sales of the Ford Escape and Ford Everest, which increased by 43 and 25 percent, respectively. The increased Ford vehicle sales in October continued a strong upward trend during the past five months (June-October), with overall sales rising 25 percent, or by 558 units, compared to the same period last year. The Ford Everest achieved the biggest jump in year-over-year sales during this five-month period, increasing 43 percent. Indeed, the Ford Escape (13%), Ford Ranger (4%), and Ford Focus (4%). The month of November saw Ford Philippines' sales increase 36% compared to the same month in 2006, with YTD sales registering a 2.8% increase (vs. YTD 2006). Strong retail sales performance of the recently-launched 2010 Ford Escape and Ford Everest sustained Ford Philippines' sales momentum through the month of November.

Rapide Auto Care experts help rebuild cars, lives

RAPIDE Auto Service Experts, the leading car care service center in the country, helped victims of the recent calamities by offering a 20% discount on its services such as oil change, tune-up, Rust-Proof, & Lite package. "On top of this, we also offer our help to the first 100 callers whose cars were ruined by the floods. This is the company's own way of helping our countrymen and kababayans who were greatly affected by the disaster," said Henry Magsalay, Rapide's operations manager. Aside from all these generous freebies, Rapide also provides free check-up and diagnosis for computer boxes which most modern cars are equipped with. Regrades said these computer boxes are very vital since it controls most of the car's functions and replacing it is very costly. "It is imperative to have it checked right away after being immersed in flood water to further minimize the damage," he added. The promo is also applicable for flood-affected vehicles. For Rapide's upcoming promos, call its hotlines at 8982012, 896-9126, 09189721103 (Smart), 09176988222 (Globe), 09236486978 or visit www.rapide.com.ph.

SeaOil holds bloodletting this Christmas

INSTEAD of a holding a grand company party for the holidays, SeaOil recently held simultaneous blood drives at the SeaOil offices in Ortigas Center and its plant in Bataan, Mariveleno City. The Mass Blood Donation is one of the company's CSR activities this December season and was held at the Philippine National Red Cross. SEAOIL collected over 80 bags of blood donations from its employees, family. SeaOil president Francis Glenn Yu (in white) and SeaOil Chief Operations Officer Stephen Yu (to his left).

Monarch Insurance gives away trips

A MOTORIST from Quezon City were the trip to Hong Kong from auto insurance expert Monarch Insurance and Petron Corporation. Renato Rosal, who simply filled-up at a Petron station area a trip to Hong Kong provided by Monarch Insurance On the Spot promo. Another motorist, this time from Mandaue City, won the trip to Boracay also for simply loading P500 worth of gasoline from a Petron station. Ardita M. Suzon now has a vacation waiting for him in Boracay courtesy of Monarch Insurance. Thousands of others were given sports watches for simply activating the On the Spot sticker to their cars during the exciting promo held from October to December 6, 2006. Other prizes during the raffle included iPod shuffles, Nokia cellphones and DVD players. Winners in the raffle promo will be notified via postal mail. Monarch Insurance is the only auto insurance in the country that delivers On the Spot payment to clients who get involved in accidents. Policy holders are given a check for the amount of their car repair about one hour after they get into a car accident.

Season of twists, turns and drama

JENSON BUTTON, WHO BEGAN 2009 IN danger of becoming a desk quotes millionaire, ended it as world champion after a year where Formula One lurched from one drama to another.

Gabriele Benedi chief Flavio Briatore was banned for life for his role in the infamous "Crashgate" affair while Toyota and BMW called it quits as the global financial crisis continued to bite.

After 12 months, it was fitting that the year closed with nine-time former world champion Michael Schumacher struggling off his 41 years, was poised to begin to drive for Mercedes in 2010, the German manufacturer having purchased Brawn GP which had taken Button to his historic title.

Button could never have dreamed how the season would unfold after Honda pulled the plug on their F1 operations, a decision that threatened to end the career of a driver who had never realised his potential.

But Barrow won six of the season's opening seven races to lay the foundation for it's single after Ross Brawn intervened to save the ailing team.

Barrow secured the championship with a fourth place finish in Brazil and sailed the 17-race series in Abu Dhabi in November with 95 points, 11 better than Germany's Red Bull driver Sebastian Vettel, whose last race wins marked him down as a potential 2010 champion.

"When I first jumped in a car 11 years ago I never expected to be world champion," said 28-year-old Button, who will drive for McLaren in 2010 alongside 2008 champion Lewis Hamilton.

Team principal Brawn was in tears after his other runners-up.

"All the people who couldn't be with us, because we had to cut the team after the winter, my thanks go to them. I hope they've enjoyed it because they've been part of what we've done," said the former Ferrari technical chief.

Barrow, Button's 18th world champion, will battle the weight of history when he starts out on his title defense next year as some of his predecessors have won back-to-back titles.

Hamilton endured a tortuous season, having to wait until the 16th race of the season in Hungary to record his first victory.

The McLaren star was at the centre of the season's first scandal when he was accused of lying about an overtaking incident involving Jarno Trulli in the opening race in Melbourne.

"Lingate" saw McLaren's long time sporting director Dave Ryan eventually suspended and the drivers also sanctioned specially after the team was found guilty of deliberately providing misleading information to race stewards.

Nelsinho Piquet's reputation for providing as much intrigue off the track as on it continued to the end in 2009.

Briatore stepped down as Renault chief and was then hit with a lifetime ban after being found to have ordered former driver Nelsinho Piquet to deliberately crash at the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix.

"This decision is a legal absurdity," said Briatore.

Also wearing goodbye in F1 was FIA chief Max Mosley, who stepped down after 16 years in charge to be replaced by Former Ferrari sporting director Jean Todt.

Meanwhile, Schumacher had been tipped to return to the sport in mid-year when Ferrari driver Felipe Massa suffered a season-ending horror crash in Hungary.

Fitness concerns kept the German legend out of the seat, but he is expected to make a dramatic return with Mercedes in 2010.

The German team will have one of a number of new faces on the grid with the first Brawn's Virgin lining up alongside Campos, who will have fellow Seven, the nephew of triple world champion Ayrton Senna, behind the wheel.

US F1 are other new boys while the legendary name of Lotus is also back on the scene. AFP

Suzuki-VW establish comprehensive partnership

Suzuki Motor Corporation (Japan) and Volkswagen AG (Germany) have reached a common understanding to establish a comprehensive partnership, marking an important step towards the future for both car manufacturers. In terms of product portfolio, global distribution and manufacturing capacities, both companies complement each other.

To support a smooth development of this relationship, Volkswagen will purchase 19.9% of Suzuki's issued shares, and subject to approval of the relevant authorities, the transaction is expected to close in January 2010. Meanwhile, Suzuki intends to invest up to one half of the amount received into shares of Volkswagen. Both companies will form strategic partnerships to support their successful strategies in these challenging times.

In the automotive industry, where globalization and diversification proceed in parallel, both companies will establish a cooperative relationship while respecting each other's independence as a stand-alone entity. Both parties are focused on achieving synergies in the areas of rapidly growing emerging markets as well as in the development and manufacturing of innovative and environmentally friendly compact cars.

In announcing the partnership, Suzuki and Volkswagen note, "As demand continues to rise for smaller cars and for powertrains with higher fuel efficiency and lower CO2 output, Volkswagen and Suzuki will offer a compelling solution for customers in emerging markets buying a car for the first time and also for customers in advanced economies seeking to lower their CO2 footprint while still enjoying the freedom of transport offered by an exciting range of cars."

In fiscal year 2008 Volkswagen, which has a workforce of 370,000, sold 6.3 M vehicles, generating sales revenue of 113.8 B euros and achieved an operating profit of 6.3 B euros. Volkswagen operates 61 production plants worldwide.

Suzuki, with a workforce of 50,000, sold 2.3 M vehicles and 3.28 M motorcycles in the 2008 - 2009 financial year (to March 31), generating sales revenue of 20.9 B euros and an operating profit of 539 M euros. Suzuki operates 8 plants in Japan as well as 34 production companies in countries such as India, Hungary, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Spain. In the Philippines, Suzuki is the only integrated automotive company, offering motorcycles, passenger cars and commercial vehicles in its model line-up.

SUZUKI

Way of Life!

Whatever, wherever the occasion, take the new Mitsubishi Strada with you. With its new sleek look as highlighted by a redesigned front fascia and new aluminum wheels plus an upgraded audio system with steering wheel control, you're sure you're riding in style. Sit back and relax in its spacious cabin, with a rising comfort of a sedan. Named 4-stars by the Euro NCAP, it's the safest pick up in its class. So you know you're strapped in safety whether just driving around the city or taking that long journey to your favorite weekend spot. The Strada is also a tough truck with its 2-door rally tested four wheel drive system to ensure that you can tackle the roughest terrain. It's not called the all around pick up for nothing.

MITSUBISHI MOTORS Drivetomorrow

Off to Subic on a Subie

Text and photos by Alvin Uy
Contributor

LAST WEEK WASN'T A PARTICULARLY long weekend, but when handed with the keys to the all-new Subaru Outback, I planned a roadtrip faster than I could say scrubba-doo. What better place than Subic? It's just a couple of hours away with nice long stretches along SCTEX that allows speeds twice the legal limit, if one dares, and roads that are, as my bulldozer brother-in-law puts it—easy "drainside."

The all-new Subaru Outback, named after the rough fastness of Australia, is a very capable sport-utility vehicle. It's not just another wagon with a tall suspension and a fatuous badge. Even with its newer more-wagon looks, it is surprisingly built to be a performer, on road or off-road. Cleverly planned and designed, the 2008 Outback is a touches longer in wheelbase and has grabs at the shoulders by 2 inches, but has shorter front and rear overhangs by second 2 inches each for better off-road approaches.

Looking further at the numbers, its overall package is shorter compared to its predecessor. However, the interior room volume is up by 7 percent partly because of a higher roof while rear seat legroom is up by 4 inches. Further down, the chassis allows 8.7 inches of ground clearance, which gives the Outback a better clearance compared to some SUVs and yet it gives a lower step-in height, almost unnoticeable to sedans. With a total height of 66 inches, the long front hood gives a more wagon-like appearance and feel than a real SUV.

Aside from having a good ground clearance, its Symmetrical AWD system makes it a competent off-roader, which is quite unusual for such car-like dimensions and handling. Of course one cannot assume it is purpose built for extreme off-roading but it does have true SUV-like prowess and versatility. Spatiously seating five adults, its 2.5 liter DOHC boxer six pack gives out 256 horsepower with enhancement up in the redline. The 91-inspired paddle shift comfortably shifts up or down as it barrels through the up and down hilly terrains en route to my destination.

These new Outback models are equipped with Vehicle Dynamics Control (VDC), a feature which combines stability and traction control capability. The all-new electronic full-time driving system helps the vehicle to plant until the driver applies the throttle to pull away from a stop. Subaru's previous systems held the car in place for only a few seconds.

The MacPherson-type strut front suspension is mounted to a new engine cradle, and the engine is attached to the cradle using new hydraulic mounts. The new cradle is designed to also enhance crash-worthiness in front. A new double-wishbone rear suspension, mounted to a sub frame, replaces the previous multi-link configuration to provide improved ride and handling. The combination of the new rigidity and the new suspension design help to reduce levels of noise, vibration, and harshness. Increased wheel travel and optimized suspension geometry improve ride comfort.

With Christmas around the corner, it suddenly dawns to me I will be the so-called cool-or mom sleeper and just spend the holidays reminiscing about this very able car and off-road car.

On and slightly off-the-road in the all-new Subaru Outback

THE INTERIOR room volume of the Subaru Outback is up by 7% partly because of a higher roof while rear seat legroom is up by 4 inches. Spatiously seating five adults, the Outback packs a SUV-like presence and versatility.

Jazz say you like it

Text and photos by Charles E. Bulan

TWO WEEKS OF DRIVING THE HONDA Jazz and I'm convinced that this is the type of car we all need to own in these days of skying cost of car ownership, increasing traffic congestion and global warming.

While the snappy-looking 1.3-liter Jazz won't raise your pulse at full throttle, its 100-horsepower engine is still sufficient to give you the needed pull when pushing for lane position or overtaking trucks and big vehicles.

But of course, you buy the 1.3 Jazz not for its speed but for its ability to help you save at the pump. After two weeks and nearly 1,400 km of driving in and around Metro Manila traffic congested streets, the car's automatic version returned an average Fuel consumption number of 14.6 km per liter.

Ahead of its peers

While this is not yet the best fuel efficiency mark posted for this type of car, the 1.3 Jazz is certainly ahead of its peers in terms of fuel efficiency. A number of car buyers overlook this fact when faced with the car's P771,000 price tag (for the automatic 1.3-liter version).

Based on a preventive maintenance cost computation, a Jazz owner can skip the first 1,800 and 5,000 km check up, spend P2,000.38 on the first 10,000 km (with merely) and then skip the 15,000 km mark.

By the time the Jazz reaches the 20,000 km mark (after a year), the owner would have spent just P1,580.05. On the 60,000 km mark (third year), the owner would have spent just P13,513.04 and by the end 100,000 km mark (fifth year) just P44,365.91.

Practical proposition

The Jazz is certainly not among those compact cars that sacrifice space and practicality for better fuel economy. With sufficient cabin space for a family of five, the Jazz is a practical proposition as well.

When Honda Cars Philippines began selling the Jazz in 2004, Filipino car buyers were introduced to a new type of compact hatch that not only relyon cool design and excellent fuel economy ratings to capture market acceptance.

For the first time, car buyers were presented with a compact vehicle that put to good use every inch of its interior space, just like a small condo unit.

Look around and there are endless depressions, pockets and storage compartments where you could place loose change, small items, CD cases and documents. In fact, if you will care to count them all, the Jazz has a total of 16 cup holders inside!

Winning formula

The Honda Jazz has always been about utility and the second generation dream no-sign of Unlucking with the winning formula.

The wide opening rear doors that aid access to the back seats complement the high-

FOR a pint-sized car, the Jazz is roomy enough to easily accommodate a full suspension mountain bike

is usual spacious rear seats.

Not many compact cars have the so-called "Ultra Seat" feature: the rear seats can be folded smoothly low and flat and to undesired seats flipped up against the backrest, leaving a tall loadbox stretching across the cabin in front of the seat.

I was able to fit inside a full suspension mountain bike with the front wheel detached inside and just for the heck of it, managed to put in two 4-foot potted bamboo plants.

This MPV looks of the Jazz is certainly a big come-on for a compact car that could easily answer through integrated lumen and right-sporting specs (Honda's sports 1.2-liter variant), sedan, 1.6-meter-wide and handy 4-meter-long body).

With the economical gasoline and four-cylinder engine thrown in, the Jazz should be extremely well suited to the needs of today's Filipino car buyers.

THIS DRIVER was just a friend wanting to make her friends' special day truly one-of-a-memorable.

THE FASCIA with a touch of Swiss

'Stephen's car' shows up for a dream wedding

From page B3 >

He cited the otherwise lightsaber Lexus and LS would be going through less than 24 hours later. The look also explained the reason the 300C required the sticker cutouter 'tune-among all cars in the GMA stable. Andrew explained that upwardly mobile newlyweds/siblings up to senior executives in their 50s shared a characteristic with the 300C.

Andrew said this was why the 300C would be found "parked in front of firehouses (now known) with 22-inch bling wheels and at bank executives' parking slots." And yes, he confirmed, the black ones were the hottest to sell.

The physical attractions to the 300C big package is its macho look: the 18-inch powdered aluminum wheels, the high belt line configuration, large chrome grille, chromed hood, high-intensity headlamps and the multi-reflector fog lamps.

To complement the looks was the generous thirst was available under the hood. The 2.7-liter V6 engine (the highest end 300C was powered by a 5.7-liter Hemi engine) generated torque of 190 lb. ft/4,000 rpm, a power output of 190hp/6,400 rpm mated to a 5-speed Auto Tiptronic.

Set to weight and size, it was surprisingly responsive and nimble. A swerving, indeed, of the elegant per spin qualities of different-sized cars.

This slightly used 300C was, by the looks of it, considered 'found cars, still sorry we borrow phone and an odometer reading that read 600 km. This driver was about to add at least 10 percent more to its total mileage life so far.

This particular unit, though, was being offered at P1.3 million, a "real bobby, sophisticated car" by all standards, priced nearly as close to the new Toyota Camry as possible. But its viewed competitors were the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, or the BMW 5-Series (both retailing at least P1 million more). Also, this 300C being sold by GMA Motors is built in Austria, from the same manufacturing facility that builds the Mercedes-Benz E-Class.

The myGIC Multimedia Entertainment system with a 30GB capacity for music and photos, with 6Gb) remembering, would also be perfect for music lovers Long and Li, if it's telegraphed that they would get stuck in Friday afternoon traffic in Taguig.

Michael Lasqo carsguru

From the driver's home somewhere south of Manila, to the high-altitude Tad Thin Hotel took more than an hour of negotiating Friday traffic. That was no problem as the voice, rhythm and groove of the late great Michael Jackson kept the rider quiet and responsive to the changing traffic conditions.

Of course, when the blushing bride was about to enter her dream ride upon this driver's arrival at the hotel, Jackson's "Thriller" had to be respectfully discontinued.

From the love being flowing green, the stunning bride was easily able to slip into the back seat. The 300C seemed to glide over the unpaved, bumpy stretch from the hotel to the San Antonio de Padua quasi parish in Barangay Poso Bilang, Cavite.

To make everything crystal clear, the ride was not the highlight of the wedding. It was a day marking the start of a new life for Alissa and LA. This driver was just a friend wanting to make her friends' special day truly even more memorable. As she drove the newlyweds off into the sunset on board a shiny black Chrysler 300C, they had forgotten about Stephen all together.

It was clear they only had eyes for each other.

Wet and wild year

From page B2 >

March

A seemingly lazy month for Lexus marketers forward with their RX350 while Ford introduces the ever-reliable Ranger.

April

The Manila International Auto Show (MIAS) 2009 closed its doors last April 5 with over 76,000 visitors enjoying a plethora of public debuts of new model cars that were launched in the first quarter. This year also witness a growing interest of Chinese car brands like Chana, Chery, Foton, JAC, Lifan and Great Wall began to mark their presence in the local automotive scene. The Foton MPX as well as a number of Great Wall car models debuted. The venerable Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X was introduced and also showcased in MIAS.

May

Manila saw the launch of the world's first car that can stop traffic and itself. The Volvo XC60 caused quite a sensation upwardly in our multi-making cellphone-crazy motoring market. GMA Motors also introduced the all-new Mercedes E-Class.

June

Aside from its entertainment adversaries, Toyota Motor Philippines pioneered the introduction of hybrid cars in 80-with the Toyota Prius. Ford Everest was also introduced and quickly gained ground.

July

The rainy month of July saw the introduction of Car Shoppe Digital Super Value w/ QUICKCA, a practical answer to Manila's flood prone streets. Although at this point, we haven't heard of "Ondoy" yet. Hyundai also launched its H-100 All Purpose Multi Cab. Aside from a steady DFW-based economy, Hyundai hasn't forgotten to capitalize on the large entrepreneur market. PGA also introduced Audi's Q5 2.0 TFSI.

August

Who's afraid of ghosts? Certainly not the following luxury cars that debuted during **the Chinese ghost month—the BMW 7 Series, Lexus RX450 convertible and Mercedes GLC-Class. And let's not forget the GM-Isuzu** (sorry, no pun intended).

September

Do you remember September? Well, who can forget? Ondoy made such a mess that left hundreds dead and thousands of cars destroyed. Surprisingly, only the debutante Ford Range bridged in the job battling the rivers flooded streets of the metro. All the rest were handsome but found exotic Cotta-preservers—Audi's A4 3TSI, BMW Z4 Roadster and the Porsche Panamera. The first luxury hybrid also made its debut—the Mercedes-Benz S400 Hybrid. Being a left-handed country, we also had the privilege of seeing Auto's first S400 hybrid debut.

October

The Car of the Year-Philippines 2009 awardee Subaru Legacy and the Subaru Outback debuted this month, along with the following Tiangson sports models—their 370Z, Nissan's iconic 8-door coupe and Murano GT; as well as the Volvo C30, S40, and V50 2.0L Powershift models. As the Mitsubishi Lancer marks the production of its 500,000th unit, the new Lancer EX was launched this month.

November

This month saw Nissan introducing its Navara BLUE EDITION, 4x4 with its 2010 Europe while Mazda introduced its Mazda CX-7 and 2010 Mazda CX-9 models.

Much to the delight of MINI aficionados, BMW had a soft launch as a prelude to its formal introduction in January. GM and Chevrolet Philippines together with local partners Covenant Car Company Inc. (CCCI) inked the inception of their partnership awarding TCCI as the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet here in the Philippines. The Hyundai Legend lives on! This month also marks Honda's (HCC) 300,000th unit sold in ZP and 18 million worldwide.

December

GDS Motors marks another milestone with its 20th anniversary, while Hyundai launches the much-awaited Tucson. And to cap it off, Great Wall Motors launches its first outlet in Alabang and a second one in Quezon City. Both the 2010 Mitsubishi Pajero and Montero Sport were also introduced.

2010

While Ondoy and the United States may have given us the economic crisis, there is a silver lining. Car sales are up and dealerships continue to sprout nationwide. Just like in any crisis moment, we always come out blessings free and wind for the wheels to turn. 2009 wasn't so bad after all.

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THE VOLVO XC90

*Free Volvo Rear Seat Entertainment (RSE) System comes FREE with every new purchase of a Volvo XC90. Promo valid from December 15, 2009 to January 15, 2010 only. Applies to purchases made in Volvo Manila only. Photos may vary from actual unit.

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Editor Joey N. Arnaiz

'Stephen's car' shows up for a dream wedding

CHAUFFEUR for a day: husband and wife for a lifetime. The 300C stands between 2 twins.

By Tessa H. Salazar

IS EVERY SINGLE woman's dream to have the man she truly loves by her side, exchanging lifetime vows with her, in a rustic church, where all her friends and loved ones would bear witness to a union never to be put asunder. For Inquirer's resident artist and marketing services coordinator Alizza "Leng" Bationg, her dream day was all of these... and more.

December 11, 2009

Today was the day this writer had a very compelling reason to drive the Chrysler 300C.

Rented in 2005, three (then four) years earlier, fellow VS luxury, sensible GAIN Money Philippines senior marketing manager, offered the 300C for a spin.

But what would be the "spin" for this silver-suavely mid-sized luxury sedan? At that time, this writer found no worthy event to flaunt the 300C. And so she had to turn down the car offer after persistent offer of a one drive. She knew a day would come for the 300C.

Who would have thought that day would come as a result of a love relationship started three years earlier, in 2002?

2003

This was the year Leng joined the Inquirer family. It was also the year Luis Anthony "LA" Morales became an editorial artist for the same broadsheet. (Years the two met, it was as if they were old friends, which they actually were. Leng and LA were college classmates and friends at the College of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Santo Tomas).

Friendship blossomed into mutual feelings of love, and before long, they considered each other soulmates-sharing the same passion for design (both were visual artists) and lifestyle (both loved Korean-novelas, pets, the same type of music, racing car designs, road scenery).

As one Korean telenovela they viewed together, they watched a character named Stephen drive a shiny black Chrysler 300C. From then on, the couple fantasized about the day they would be driven to their wedding on board "Stephen's car."

The first time that their fantasy ride would become reality was when this writer commissioned the two to design the logo of the Car of the Year Philippines in 2009, which they did with no sweat. The next time, in 2008, was not so subtle. Leng personally requested this writer to finally drive the shiny black 300C in their wedding car.

IN ONE Korean telenovela they viewed together, they watched a character named Stephen drive a shiny black Chrysler 300C.

Not wanting to disappoint a newlywed's request (this writer has not turned down any offer yet to become a bridesmaid or maid of honor for another couple's wedding), she reactivated her long-standing offer.

This was it, she thought.

No driver

But there was one catch. Leng did not agreed to hire GAIN's own chauffeur, a person, as mentioned, driving black pin-striped 300C. But the responsibility fell on this writer's hands. Almost three million pesos' worth of elegant machine work and craftsmanship was signed to be her name. Would she let someone else drive this from Manila to Tagaytay to Silang, and back to Manila?

This writer was to become a driver, all for love.

Thursday, December 10, 2009

The day before the wedding was the day GAIN released the 300C to this writer for thumbless.

Palm racing, this driver eased this commanding vehicle out of the GAIN pre-owned garage to Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City. Then, to the North Luzon Expressway, to Tagaytay, to Silang, to Santa Rosa, Laguna, to Alabang, to Makati, to Mandaluyong, to Quezon City, to Commonwealth Avenue, to Quezon City, to Commonwealth Avenue, to Quezon City, to Commonwealth Avenue

Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan Contributing Editor Lia S. Bernardo

LIFESTYLE Home & Entertaining

Do-it-yourself

With Anton Barreto and Marisa Lapa

Colorful Christmas tablescape

Set the merry mood with an easy Christmas tablescape

D.I.Y.

Materials

Candles from Cosmo, Greenhills S
Table accessories from Next...Fashion St.
Red berries from Landmark Makati

1. For the centerpiece, put together fresh pine leaves or cypress leaves (buy from Dangwa, Market! Market! or your favorite florist). Mix in fruits, pinecones and Christmas balls for color.
2. Personalized touches will make the setting extra special.
3. Add flair to pillar candles by tying a band of ribbon around

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Ricky Reyes, the man behind the country's most successful beauty salon chain, sticks to his maximalism

PHOTOS BY MARK CRISTINO

Why 'Mother Ricky' believes in red during recession

THE 11-ft Christmas tree anchors the rest of the décor in the house

HOLIDAY garlands greet visitors upon entrance.

By Irene C. Perez

THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICE IN Ricky Reyes' home is the towering 22-ft tall Christmas tree that dwarfs everything in the palatial home, including stacks of gifts under it from some 2010 presidential aspirants and the who's who of Philippine society.

"I used to have a real Christmas tree, but now I have a reusable one that I have been using for the past five years," Reyes said. "My ensemble it from five years and every year I change the trimmings."

Through the years Reyes has been known for extended Christmas.

His colors this year are silver and red. "I had all red before; then metallic with gold, silver and copper; green and white. Tapos all white, kasi para naman colorful ako noon? I had to add a hint of calm."

The towering tree has red and black pink roses and mango flowers, silver sequined balls, mirror balls, metallic red trumpets. In lieu of a star, Reyes arranged a bloom of red-and-gold leis and placed it on top. Like the homeowner, the Christmas décor is colorful, kitschy and over-the-top.

"It's overdone and I want a lot of reds to give a good vibe. I like red, it's bright and glinting. I'm bitsin, too, and it's my color. It's shinier and sets the mood."

Bigger, better

There is no such thing as too much when it comes to Christmas for Reyes. Oh! her home doesn't just seem overdone, but also overdecorating.

"Christmas is a time of abundance, how could you stretch it?" he asks. The trimmings entered to the second story, he adds, save for the four bedrooms.

Reyes, the self-styled "Mother Ricky" by friends and clients, is a businessman, number one businesswoman. He believes that even if the year has been marked with deaths, crimes and calamities, one should not forego celebrating holiday cheer.

"The more that I should put an effort to make things brighter," he says. "My partner complains sometimes, 'Ano ba 'yan, ang daming nanaman ng mga dekorasyon, ang gulo-gulo' and I'd say 'Apoko ng mello, para saan pang may pasko'di naman tayo mello.'"

And he has a point. Multimillion wouldn't work well in the 2,300 sq m home with high ceilings and roomy interiors. He initially had four architects, but they wouldn't comply with his penchant for volume. So armed with books and magazines, he designed his dream home—an old-World inspired home with heavy columns, a grand staircase and curved recliners all the way up to the ceiling.

Quite a handful is the 40-seater dining conveyor to the long dining table that seats 20 people. Reyes insists that with a home like that, the furniture and décor should be as big, if not bigger.

"I design flowers or vases as centerpieces. Mind-long poinsettias. I use a lot of all-season flowers and berries, too," Reyes says.

FLOWERS, here, mirror balls and sequined balls as table accent

BEADED trimmings suspended from the ceiling add texture to the décor.

ALL SET for Christmas. The family drops in here at least once a week.

Nontraditional décor

Large floral arrangements are all over the house, most of them standing bigger than an average human. He likes it with lots of vines and dripping details to stimulate movement and flow. It's also table decorating involves the nontraditional items.

"I hang big earrings, beaded bebe, strings of beads, butterflies. After the holidays pwede na 'yan sa mga pagawa, sa mga events. Walang sayang."

From Oct. 30 onwards, the house gets all bling-y and fully beaded. It takes several days to finish the displays with the help of an electrician, his household help, a carpenter and people from his salon. The transformation doesn't end as much until this is where his being a businessman kicks in. Scouring items on sale.

WITH mom Stephanie and Jaymee

Smart shopper

"I start buying items as early as June or July. I visit markets, and get up to 50 per cent off," Reyes explains. "I don't buy from malls because it's cheaper from there during off-season."

Those suppliers are mass-producers of export items.

"I recycle the décor from the previous year, and put it in the storage for the office," Reyes says. "I reuse those that are still OK. I also fix the salon. I make a template in one shop that the rest would copy. After Halloween, we strip down the décor and by Nov. 2, the décor should be up."

He confesses that he is fussy with his home.

"There's no day that I don't move around furniture. I am really OC when it comes to my home, everything has to be clean and neat."

Eventually, though, he "lets go" of his home after living in it for eight years.

"Bigay lahat na gamit dito sa mga mahihirap, doberma ko na. Gilpet na." He tells Manila Bulletin columnist Rambu Ledesma-Intal-Ibarra that his home is slated to be sold at the market next year, all the grandeur of it with the mostly made-to-order furniture.

"The carpet, sofas, tables are payables. I am including all of them when I sell it. I don't get attached to material things."

He is even selling his jewelry collection, his only luxury.

"I love jewelry. I love stones, big stones," he says. On one hand a chunky heart-shaped ruby framed with diamonds, and on another are horsel-size diamonds set in silver, a star-studded diamond-encrusted watch on one ear. "Sa lang nabigay ang bigay ko."

Reyes says he is planning to move in a couple of years, probably to a nearby Pasig village. So will still be with his 99-year-old mother, his partner of 16 years, and two "daughters" Stephanie, 18, and Jaymee, 6. He has two "grandchildren" with video "kids," ages 3+ and 15, who are both married.

"I am planning to downsize in my next home. I want something where everything opens up to a garden."

All the Christmas ornaments will be packed after the feast of the Magi on Jan. 6. Storage is not a problem since he has a big bodega just for the embellishments, he says.

Reyes has maintained the schedule since the '70s. Up at 6 a.m.; breakfast with the kids at 7; church for social work; go to his office on Boni ave. Mandaluyong; check; first stop of his salons; and rama in by 9:30 p.m. He hardly goes to big dinners or parties. Does he ever get bored with the routine?

"Bakit ko mapapansin yahoo it has given me so much?" he philosophically says. "I was able to sponsor 12 priests to school. I have a learning center, 40 scholars; I have subsidies. Even if they don't go back after graduation, okay lang 'yun. They're like children. They still go out, mag-asawa. I am the mother. I will always be mother."

"I'M AN ARTIST, and a somebody. I personalize the design in my home," says Reyes.

THE GRAND staircase where homecoming queen photos have had their photos taken

Colorful Christmas tablescape

From page B1

them. Use double-sided tape or animal fats to fasten the ribbon.

4. Decorate the table with Christmas-theme elements.

5. Use tiny Christmas ornaments as wine charm for the goblets.

6. Cut Christmas shapes from felt or colored board paper and use a place card. Put napkin rings, bend a berry branch to form a circle and fasten with floral wire to keep shape.

STUFF tiny Christmas ornaments as wine charm for the goblets.

DECORATE the table with Christmas-theme elements.

7. Put fruits, colorful candies and other sweet treats in nice containers to serve as tokens for guests and incorporate them in the table arrangement.

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UST Arts and Letters batch '85 to hold homecoming

THE UNIVERSITY OF STO. TOMAS IS calling all batch 1985 graduates of the faculty of Arts and Letters at a grand alumni homecoming on Feb. 15, 2008 to be held at the UST campus. All grads, alike of Literature, Asian Studies, Journalism, Communication Arts, Translation, Political Science, Behavioral Science, Economics and Philosophy are expected to come and share a night of fun, reminiscence and reunion with batchmates and professors. It will be a grand homecoming 23 years after graduation. Invalid also is a celebration of the college's 60th foundation anniversary. Get in touch with Christian Gaudiano of the secretarial at tel. 3987301 to 11, Lamyr Rabino, 0813 1804 9454303 or 7314021, professors Leo Baron, tel. 781 or 7294000.

Reggae concert

Vocalists Jonsery Bilmar and Rea Ann Matao, keyboard player Mekhi de Morales, lead guitarist Carlo Suter, bass guitarist John Elmore, percussion player Mark Don Corpuz and Rudy Dabuet and drummer Joemin Sy, collectively known as the Paperboat Band bring their island music in Concert at the Park on Dec. 27, 3 p.m. Meanie Pacilla is providing host. Admission is free.

Musical Christmas

Mangit-La Plaza presently singers Rachel Bandian, Lemuel dela Cruz and Andrew Fernando in "Twas the Night Before Christmas," today, 6 p.m. to Dec. 24, 5 p.m. The Peyote bakes senior stage with Christmas things. The Christmas series continues on Dec. 26-27, 4 p.m. with a trio performance of The Wonder of Christmas and Joy to the World, respectively. A piano series will be held Dec. 28-30, 4 p.m. Gina 2000s a musical goodbye with Bibiya "Inn's holiday hymns on Dec. 29, 3 p.m. Violinist Jay Cayona will perform on Jan. 2, 3 p.m., in "There's Always Tomorrow." Trumpeter Vosphere's "Happy New Show" will be presented on Jan. 5, 6 p.m.

Share a joy

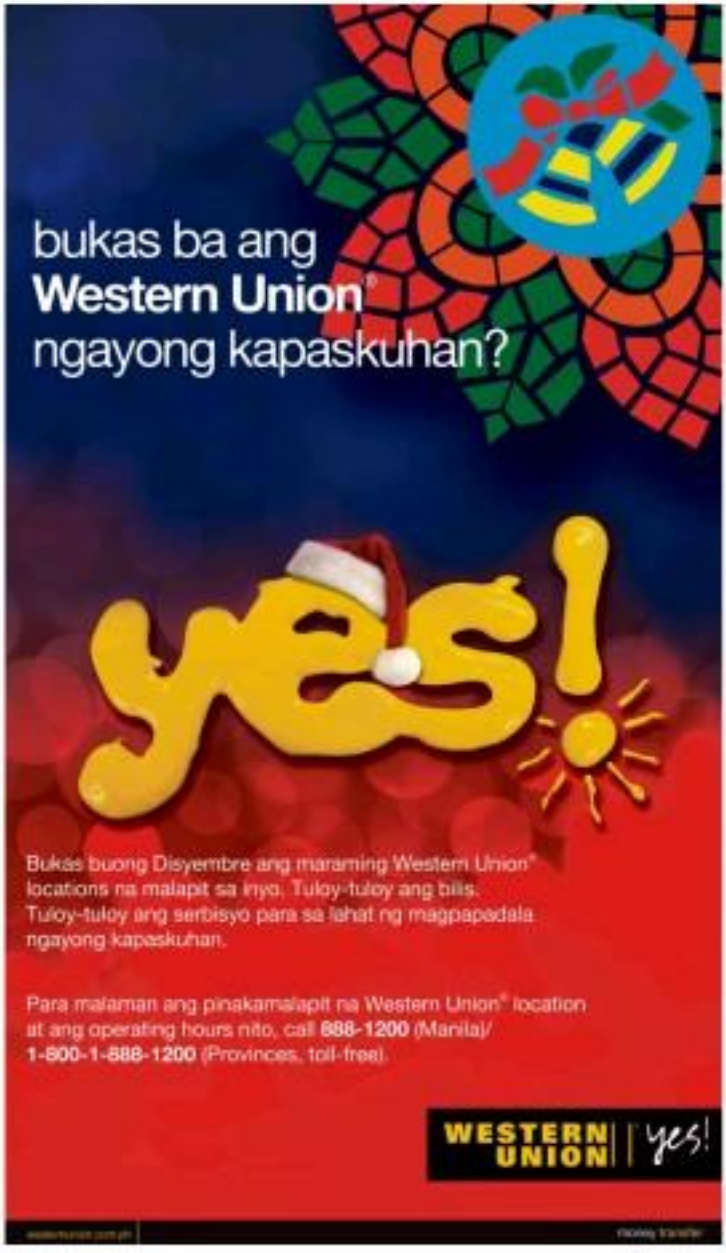
Starmall gives back to the community with its Share a Joy / Share a joy program. Bonaks old toys, clothes, books and other things for kids. All donations will be turned over to the Kinis Bachos Village during a Christmas party hosted by the mall on Dec. 24.

Christmas at Starmall

Starmall holds the Malkarte Rangkeds festivities until Jan. 1, 2010. Santa Claus will drop by today at Starmall Las Piñas and Dec. 25, Starmall Edsa-Shaw. Pete Rosales will do his mall tour on Dec. 27. Mayniyo Patabos will perform on the same day. Fireworks display will be held Dec. 30, 8 p.m., at the jay parking area of Starmall Las Piñas.

Ballet Manila's 'Paskong Pista'

Ballet Manila opens its new season with a highly festive choreographic programme having classical, contemporary and Filipino folk dance nuances set amidst colorful and joyous Christmas traditions in "Paskong Pista," which runs at the Star Theater on Sundays through Sundays. The ballet stars Ballet Manila's artistic director and premier danseuse Lisa Macuja-Elizalde along with the rest of the corps. Official free live videos of the amusement park, the show is open to all to the hearts of children and adults alike. Call 8525121.



THE CONSUMER
Cinde B. Bello

Taxi meters may be faster than a speeding bullet

IT SEEMS COMMUTERS NOT ONLY have to put up with picky and surly taxi drivers this Christmas season, but they also have to watch out for faulty meters.

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has issued a warning against cabs with meters that would probably qualify in the Formula One race. A newspaper report said the agency found at least six taxis with meters that had been tampered with, resulting to overcharging of passengers.

Drivers and/or taxi operators report edly resort to the haste-prone method to tamper with the meters. Unfortunately, the story did not explain how the system worked.

Not having a car, I resort by taxi a lot. Taxis, of course, have those green stickers that are supposed to reassure the passenger that the meters have been calibrated by authorized government people and are, thus, reliable and will reflect only the authorized fare.

Still, I often wonder if those stickers really guarantee that the passenger will not be overcharged. For certain reps I have a fairly good idea what the fare should be, like when I am going to the office from my house and vice versa. But occasionally, I find that the meter is going a little too fast.

When I see that the fare changes at almost every second, I should it out to the driver politely. Quite often, the driver will tell me that there may be something wrong with the meter so I should just pay the usual fare for the distance.

Of course, there are times when I come across drivers who will not admit that there is something wrong with the meter. If I can, I get off before I reach my destination and get another taxi.

But sometimes have to play it by ear to be safe. They have to make sure the driver will not have a fit when told that the meter can set a world record in the 100-meter dash. If they are unsure how the driver will react, the best way is to get the name of the taxi, plate and/or body number, and telephone numbers and tell the operator (unless he/she had those records installed on, before you, the LTO) upon reaching their destinations.

Under rules set by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) Regulations for Metro Manila taxis is P30 and should remain unchanged for the first 500 meters of travel. Every succeeding 300 meters or a two-minute waiting time will mean an additional P2.50.

The exceptions are the yellow taxis that normally service the airports. They will take passengers when hailed but commuters should know their flag-down is P50, then it is P4 every 300 meters. I do not hesitate to use this cab even if the fare is higher because it is always clean and nice smelling and the driver is neatly dressed and polite, professionally it inspires respect.

Meanwhile, LTFRB chief Alberto Suansing is encouraging passengers who have been "overcharged" by taxi drivers to report to him directly by calling or sending text messages to 0928-9447981. Commuters are advised to get the name of the taxi, plate and/or body number, name of the driver if it is visible, time, date and place when the "amateur" happened.

No surcharge

Credit card holders using their cards for purchases during the holidays and thereafter, should make sure the establishments do not charge them a higher price for using their cards instead of paying cash. The Credit Card Association of the Philippines (CCAP; www.ccap.net.ph) said the Department of Trade and Industry's Administrative Order No. 98, Series of 2006, prohibits any surcharge, extra charge or additional charge over and above the price tag on items when a credit card is used for payment.

Establishments with different prices for cash and card purchases should be reported to DTI at tel. 7521430.

Meanwhile, the CCAP and credit card issuers had adopted relief measures to help victims of recent calamities, particularly Tropical Storm "Unday" and Typhoon "Reming." Credit card holders can call the customer service of their credit card issuer and find out about easy payment terms.

Send letters to The Consumer, Inbayin Garcia, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 18th Chino Roces Ave. ext. Makati City; fax 897-8793-94; or e-mail thebello@inquirer.com.ph.

LIFESTYLE
Home&Entertaining

Soap snowman

Enjoy winter fun with your kids –right inside your home

By Piero Pastor
Photos by JM Lejano

DR. ROMELIZA LEJANO can't remember when she first realized she could make a snowman out of soap. All she knows is that during Christmas back in 1972, she built her first soap snowman at Perpetual Succor Hospital where she was an ob-gyn doctor.

In 1982, she built another snowman, this time in her own home where she lived with her husband and four children.

In 2007, the grandmother of nine built another soap snowman and brought it to her grandkids' school in Quezon City.

D.I.Y.

And just last week, she made another snowman—in sheer you and your family how to do it.

"This is a fun project, especially if you're in the mood. Your whole family can enjoy building your own snowman. Your kids can help make 'snow.' You can even put little surprises inside the gift boxes as an extra treat for your children or grandchildren," she said.

Here's how you can build your own soap snowman:

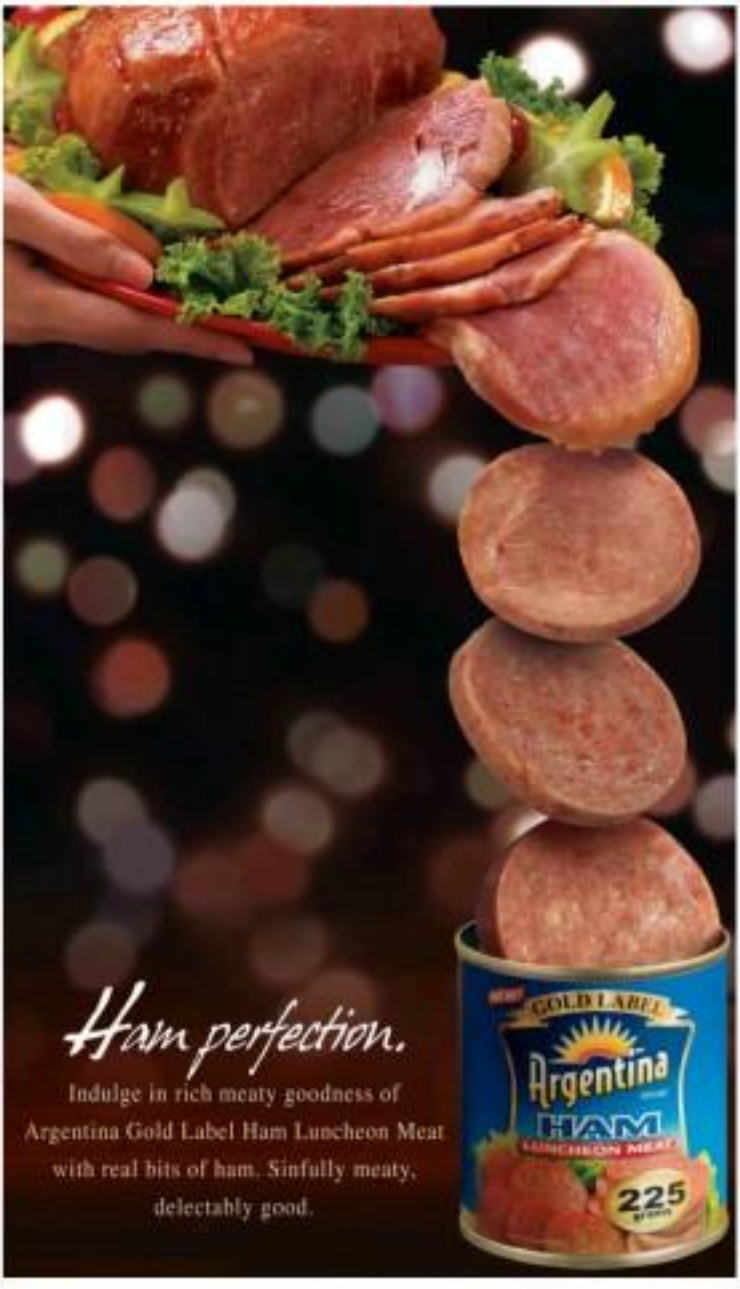
What you need:

Old newspapers, about 15 to 20
Petits soap, 8 bars
Rock salt, 1 ½ kilos
Plywood or wooden board, at least half an inch thick
Mixer
Rope or string
Plastic cocktail sticks
Old boxes
Old wrapping paper
Old ribbons (washable, preferably, so you can reuse them)
Colored construction paper
Big black buttons (to look neat)
Scarf
Bonnet
Other accessories (optional)

1. Roll pages of old newspapers and twist them into solid discs of different sizes to form the snowman's body. Secure each disc with rope or string.

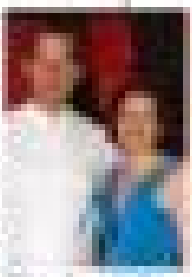
2. Connect each disc to the next with string. Arrange the discs from biggest to smallest, with the biggest disc at your base. Don't forget that the smallest disc is going to be your snowman's neck. Make sure the discs are tied securely to one another to keep your snowman solid.

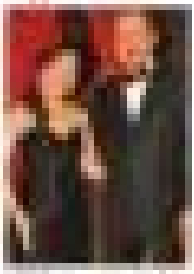
(CONTINUED ON D3)

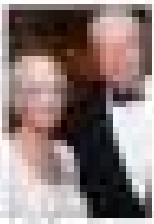


Soap snowman

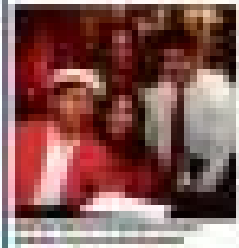
Ascott's 'Pudong Party' raises funds for Zambales' underprivileged kids

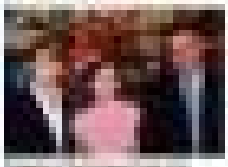


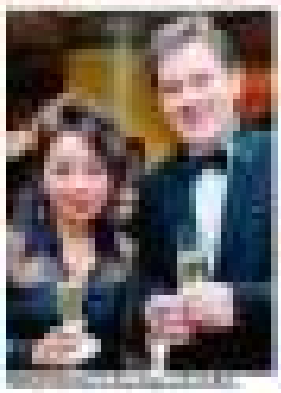


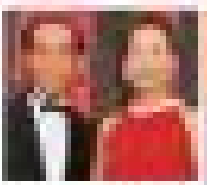


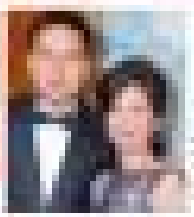
The Amazing EU Christmas at SM Supermalls

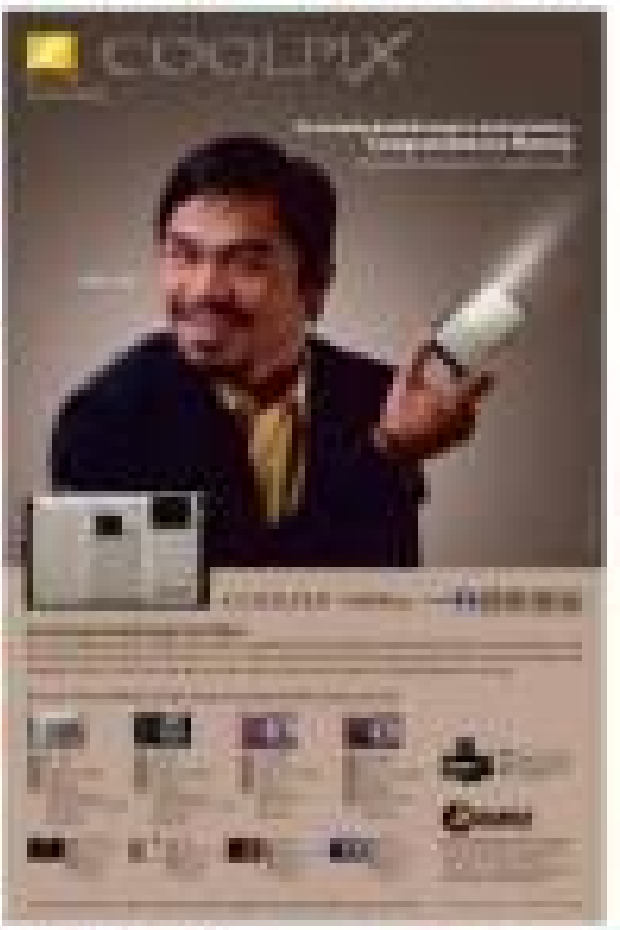


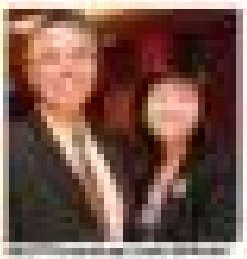


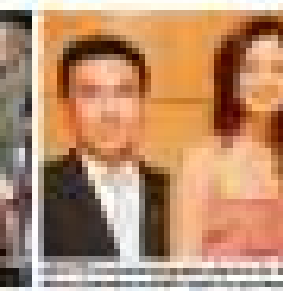


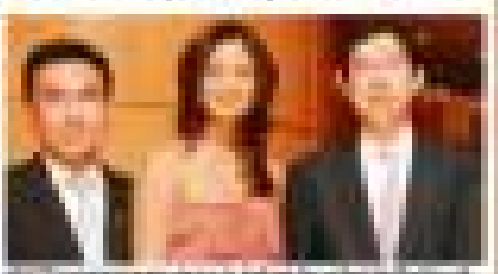


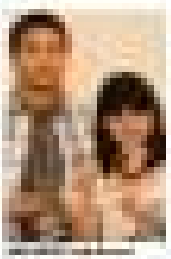












Lolo Dad's Brasserie introduces exciting menu for the Holiday Season

Christmas is for family reunions and homecomings

SUDDENLY, I FELT THE HOLIDAY blues. What is it about the season that makes us think about our childhood and Christmases past?

Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that Christmas has always been, and will always be, synonymous with the word family.

Thinking about my childhood, my favorite Christmas memory was that of being hoisted by my dad on his shoulders so I could gaze and gape in awe at the morning Christmas display of CDO department stores in Uptown, the only one of its kind in the late 1960s. Okay, You-Am-Ing myself here but looking back at such precious memories helps douse my blues away.

Today my son and I were walking in the mall and I couldn't help but smile when I overheard two families talk about their family member's homecoming with great anticipation. One family was waiting for the arrival of their kin that, an engineer in the Middle East, while another family talked about the arrival that same evening of their matriarch, a teacher based in the United States.

Homecomings are huge every December. Airports like crazy and the airports and bus terminals are forever abuzz with people waiting and going. Streamers and parties left and right—often cause the jobbagged holidaymakers on the verge of either a nervous breakdown or over fatigue, by the time the ball drops on the new year comes along.

But don't get me wrong, reunions are so much fun and the joy of having a loved one come home after a long absence, especially if it is a parent, child or sibling, is immeasurable. You see it painted all over the faces of those who await both home and in the eyes of the one who returns to the homeland, to the warm hugs of family members who have missed them terribly.

And then my thoughts turned to all those other families who had loved ones far away. Those who could not, by virtue of economics or time, afford to come home this Christmas.

Thankfully, nowadays, technology makes it possible to reunite with loved ones no matter where they are. All you need is a cellular phone or a computer, and there is simply no excuse not to keep in touch. For OFW families, or any long distance relationship for that matter, communication is always key to fostering strong bonds. That God the networks are jammed with joy and sentiment on Dec. 25 all the way to the new year.

Though I have many wonderful memories of childhood Christmases, after my father died, for many years, Christmas was just one, unwanted day for me.

Bittersweet holidays

I remember how I used to cringe whenever I would hear Gary V's "Bukas na Sisimba Ko" and to this day, for some reason, it is the song that reminds me most of that first Christmas after I lost my father. In 1990, I lost and gained a son in one year with the death of Migz in June, and the birth of Louie in September. I can only describe Christmas that year as bittersweet.

So this holiday season, I think of all those people—the families with the multilayer relatives, the OFW mother or father reunited with their children, the OFW spouse left behind to care for the young ones, the bereaved, old and new, remembering and missing the loved ones now gone, the single mom or dad and the child who has to shuttle between homes on Christmas eve or day.

May they all find comfort and joy no matter what shape their family may be in. We are a resilient people, and in this season of hope, wrapped in the love of family, friends and community, we all still can find some reason to rejoice. A blessed and meaningful Christmas to you all!

E-mail the author at cathybabaan@gmail.com

ROOTS AND WINGS

Cathy Babao-Cabahug

LIFESTYLE *Home & Entertaining*

Life's a beach

And this one is a tribute to Filipino design

By Pam Pastor

(Editor's note: This is excerpted from Condo magazine urbary 4, appeared in issue sixty of September-October issue.)

J. ANTONIO MENDOZA BUILDS HIS own home—a split-level seaside retreat that has become his refuge from the city and a tribute to his 20 years in architecture.

Don't make the mistake of calling it a beach home. It is a beach and, yes, it is on the beach, but "I consider this my haven," said the interior designer.

"I've always wanted to live by the beach and have this view. But because I have to work, I maintain a one-bedroom apartment in the city. My city apartment is now my pied-à-terre."

Antonio's modern split-level home is in Batangas—amid her grand reason. "I've always liked this place. I like the community here. It's very familiar. The people are familiar. I have cousins who also live here. It's representative. The people here

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Life's a beach

From page E1

keep to themselves and yet are very close. I also like the wilderness. I've always wanted to build a very clean, sleek-looking house coming out of the cogon and the field. I like that sharp contrast."

Since we are not having family, Anton believes that design was his destiny. "I think it's fate. My father's an architect, my mom was an interior designer. My sister paints, my brother's a graphic artist. Our house was forever changing. Our houses were always nice—my grandmother's, my aunt's. Growing up, I was exposed to all those nice things. I guess it was second nature."

One of the country's leading interior designers, Anton was also talented in architecture. Over the years, he has worked on only nine houses ("mostly for my family and my old friends," he says). His Batangas home is the first house he designed and built for himself. "After 28 years, I built my own house," he says.

He considers the house a tribute to his 28 years in architecture. Anton acquired the property in 2007 and started building the house in December of the same year. "I did the design for this house in a week and did not make any changes. I design by instinct, and it's always my first instinct that's correct."

The house was completed in October 2006. Anton got exactly what he wanted—a home that reflected not just his tastes, but also his personality. "I wanted a modern house that was representative of me. I'm a very relaxed person, it's an exterior home."

Anton, who believes that designers look like their houses, is proud of the fact that he and his home share a lot of similarities.

"I wanted to design a house that was me. I chose everything, down to the last things. From the outside, the very horizontal structures and the elongated proportions are very distinctive and very representative of my style. The house is very linear. The lines are precise. I'm very geometric. I don't like rounded edges. The clean lines—that is me. My color palette is very limited. My preference is really for neutrals—woods, wenge, gray oak, bronzes, and lots of whites and white suites. I love the way I dress in simple. I'm just in black and white. My clothes are always crisp."

Like him, the house is low key, not ostentatious. "I don't have highfalutin words for my design concept," said Anton. "The design is very pragmatic, nothing is arbitrary, everything is well thought of."

AT NIGHT, the house is a composition of highly defined lines and space—with the entertaining areas (living room, dining room and bar area) all opening out to the sea. (Glass doors slide away from view when not in use.)

Embracing nature

Anton's design embraces nature. Every thing is open, even his kitchen and bar. The design is seamless. The house just flows—the front door to the rooms, the rooms to the kitchen, the kitchen to the dining area, the dining area to the living area, the living area to the terrace, the terrace to the pool, the pool to the sea.

It was almost as if he sculpted the house out of a giant slab of concrete. "I like the earthbound feel. I wanted the silhouette to be dominated. I was influenced by the mid-century modern architect Richard Neutra."

The house has a view of the Chino Roa, Peninsula de Punta Fuego, and Nasugbu behind. One thing Anton loves about his house is the sunset view. "You have a beautiful golden sunset every afternoon. For 15 minutes, you have this glaring sunlight that just washes your whole house. It's right in your face. But after that, there's beautiful light. This is a very sun-washed house."

The glaring sun isn't the biggest thing Anton has to deal with. "I'm right in front of the beach, dialogue, the southwest wind, gets crazy sometimes. I had to put storm-proof windows from Australia. They are reinforced winds of 200 kilometers. They're really made to survive typhoons. There are the second sunsets. The first windows were local, and they were blown off."

Anton's four bedrooms all have exquisite interiors. Three of the beds are his own designs, while one is a limited-edition B&B Italia. All beddings are white. "I hate mismatched sheets," he said.

There are furnishing lamps and desks designed by him, as well. There's a sofa modeled of Cornelius Vanderbilt's boat in one of the rooms. The boat, which Anton says was the 1937 American Cup, can be seen outside through the window. "It's sailing into the sunset," he says.

Anton also has a recurring theme around the house—metal, drift wood and bottle.

With four bedrooms, four bathrooms, and a pool, it's hard to believe Anton's home is just 300 square meters. He chalks this up to good use of space. "The spaces are very modest, but well thought of. As an interior designer, I designed this with furniture in mind. Everything has a place, from the last pedestal to all the artworks. The lighting is placed strategically. There's no wasted space. There's hardly no space in your way."

Anton said his house was built using modest materials. The tiles are concrete, the sliding doors aluminum. The paints, the finishes, and the cements are all from China. The secret is the way you put them together. And the secret, says Anton, is knowing what you shouldn't scrimp on.

"I spare on what I believe are the jewelry of the house—the plumbing fixtures, hardware, electrical. I have no parameters in building a house except for budget. One has to make sacrifices. The ones I could not sacrifice are the electrical and plumbing. I'm at the beach. I have to see more sun than will last. The elements are really harsh."

TOP: public-style vanities, made of gilded wood, from the 1800s, is a prize find of the homeowner. Above: Even private areas open to the sea.

Filipino heritage

Because he is passionate about Philippine culture, Anton made sure his house reflected the country's rich heritage. "My architecture style may be very global but I always make it a point that my designs have a distinctive Philippine mark or a Philippine touch or Philippine presence."

The Filipino flavor is evident in his home, from the artworks by local artists to the Ipi-nuss headdress he has on his coffee table. Filipino touches can be seen all over the house—a leather carpet made in Bicol, a ceramic, sculpture by H.R. Ocampo, a clutch piece from the collection of Roberto Villaluna, a large sculptic from Bohol, a painting by Gerri Dimbas.

Anton didn't have to go on crazy shopping sprees to fill his house with his signature mix of antiques and modern touches. By the time Anton's house was done, his furniture was ready. "A lot of the things you see inside the house are stuff I've collected over the years. They had been in storage or at my sister's or my mom's house. It took me almost a decade to furnish 28 years—I collect all these things, and they all go together. When they were finally delivered here, everything just fit."

Anton believes this is because his taste hasn't changed throughout the years. "I didn't have phases. My design principles have always been consistent."

Although Anton is a city person, he loves how his Batangas home gives him a break from suburbia. "This is a nice respite. I like the view—the ocean view is the best part. I love it here when it rains. The view is so calming. This is the place for relaxing, for you not to think of anything, for just vegetating, for letting your mind drift."

The house also comes in handy when Anton's city deadlines become too much of a burden. "My mind works very well here. Sometimes, in the middle of the week when I'm so flooded with deadlines and my mind is not working, I take one or two of my staff members and we work here. We do all the work and then we go back. They enjoy it because they get to take breaks and swim before going back to work."

Anton may take design seriously, but he also likes having a little fun. He decided to put a flagpole in front of his house because he was inspired by homes in Miami and in the Hamptons. "Ed Calma said, 'No way, you're not putting a flagpole.' I said, 'Watch, I'm going to put one,'" said he did. His neighbors and nieces enjoy the flagpole, too. "They always have a flag ceremony here. They're always changing the flag. Two weeks ago, my nephew from Canada was here so we were flying the Canadian flag."

But Anton's default flag is a peace flag, one he found on the Internet. "I chose the one with the red handsome as homage to Antonio Lopez," he says, laughing.

Anton, who is working on a hotel, a spa, a couple of restaurants, and some homes, may get busy in the city, but not enough that he fails to make the two-hour drive to his seaside home. That afternoon, as the sun was about to set, Anton walks to fix himself with a playful glint in his eye.

THE POOL—a reflection of an architecture framed by evening sky—actually serves as a "barrier" separating the house from the shoreline.

AN UNINTERRUPTED spread of blue, from the pool to the sea, at a certain eye-level

WHEN one is reclined on the bed, an eye-level "window" allows a view of the outdoors.

NECKLACES like these sell at shops for P 100.

Instant gift finds in 'Divi'

Text and photos by Jennifer S. Tapos

BEFORE YOU RUN TO MOM TO BEG for more cash (which will hamper her Christmas shopping), consider heading to Divisoria—the land of cheap yet funky and fashionable finds. It'll have you completing your Christmas list in a day. Take a look at these bought Divi baubles:

Statement necklaces

The trendy huge pendant-ended gems are versatile, and at great prices compared to their mall counterparts—P30 each, or 3 for P100. (At malls they're usually sold at around P200). They come in many designs and colors, too.

Cocktail rings

These are perfect for wearing to Christmas parties, or to give as tokens to your lady guests. You can easily buy them by the ball. Depending on the style, these rings sell for as low as P25 apiece.

Korean-inspired fashion pieces

We all love the fashion we see on our Koreanovela stars, and Divi is teeming with those kinds of clothes and accessories for men, women and even children. And, of course, those! for just P300, get doll shoes in unique and trendy designs.

Monster phone/bag accessories

These fashion-eyed critters, though designed to be phone accessories, are more appropriate for bags because of their size. They're just as big as most cell phones. Yet only P100, or P25 apiece, get four pieces of these in different monster designs and colors.

Umbrellas in a bottle

With three unique handle designs, these umbrellas can double as room or kitchen décor. Just be careful not to fill them with actual drinks! They also fit perfectly in your everyday bag and are a steal at just P60 each—P75 if you buy more than five pieces.

LED flashlights

These environmentally friendly flashlights are handy enough to bring everyday and come in cute pastel colors for girls, and in metallic shades for guys.

Aside from offering the lowest prices, Divinoria also treats its buyers to another bargain—haggling! The trick is gentle persuasion; smooth-talk your way to the price you want to pay. If you don't get your way there, settle for their best offer or check out the next stall.

KOREAN fashion invades Divi.

FLAUNT these cocktail rings at your next Christmas party.

MALL OF FAME
BONIFACIO HIGH STREET IS PHILIPPINE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION'S 2009 SHOPPING CENTER OF THE YEAR (MEDIUM CATEGORY) FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW.
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Luxury jeweler H. Stern designs timepieces specially for the modern, independent woman

Jewel-like watches –for herself

THE HISTORY OF H. Stern began when founder Hans Stern introduced the world to colored gemstones in 1945.

It was in the '50s, however, when H. Stern established a consistent focus on the modern, independent, self-purchasing woman, and a tradition of annually launching collections of outstanding technical and creative innovation.

Year after year, H. Stern deepens its presence in the world and in society as one of the top jewelers in the world and one of the most high-profile luxury names today.

Organic timepieces are molded in the shapes of river pebbles, mirroring the jewels in H. Stern's namesake collection. Their stainless steel or 18k gold cases are finished with the same artistry and exclusive techniques H. Stern developed when creating the original Golden Stones jewels, in 1997.

Golden Stones watches are in gold and stainless models with diamonds set around the dials and an assortment of engravings and materials.

H. Stern is available exclusively at Ashna Duperrouzel Store, 2/F Greenbelt 5, Ayala Center, Makati City.

H. STERN'S Golden Stones watches mirror the pebble shape of its eponymous jewelry collection.

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Wish List

Rafael Rosell

I HOPE THE INQUIRER SHINES AGAIN TO achieve its star in the '80s. I hope local pinoy still do, and pray for more collaborative work among talents from rival networks. Dream na ang aking ,Not those big people in politics, I wish them all the luck. I hope they make a difference, be role models for other politicians and put the country back on the world map.

Mayward R. Cruz

A Meryl move for Zsazsa

By Rayzel San Diego jr.

FIRST TIME ZSAZSA ZALDIVIA SPOKE with a slight Chinese accent in a scene in "Mano Po 6: Mother's Love," co-star Sharon Cuneta teased up in stitches.

"Sharon's an *hungiwah* [stupid]. I got tongue-tied," Zsazsa recalled. "I wasn't used to the accent. In other scenes, sometimes I'll control Spanish, not Chinese."

With every new movie, Zsazsa tries something new, a la Meryl Streep. "Viewers are accustomed to seeing me do TV drama," she explained. "On the big screen, I want to play different characters."

For her latest role, a cantonese spinster who scrubs her mare-in-law's stubborn, Zsazsa observed how some Chinese-Filipino friends spoke. "Those whose parents are pure Chinese speak Tagalog with just a little inflection. It's subtle, but it's there."

Which is different from her "Mano Po 2" character, a Shanghai singer who had a "thick Chinese accent," Zsazsa joked, "I

A MERYL G4

Gabby hopeful Sharon can join movie with KC

By Rhoderick R. Cruz

"EXPECTATIONS WERE HIGH. I WAS VERY nervous," said Gabby Concepcion, when the actor was asked how it felt to work with Lauren Gallino on "I Love You, Goodbye," his first movie in 13 years.

The 45-year-old actor was last seen in Marilou Diaz-dimayo's 1994 thriller, "Ibu 11 Utos: Hihilahin Mo Ang Aking Ibig." He moved to the United States in March 1995, returned in April 2008 and became a contract artist of ABS-CBN. He appeared in the TV drama series "Dan Po Lamang," and is now in the cast of "Hahali Mary Isang Dose."

GABBY G4

"THE TWO (shows) helped get my career back," says Gabby Concepcion.

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5 AVATAR	10 TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON

manila

1 INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS	1 AVATAR
2 AVATAR	2 AVATAR
3 AVATAR	3 AVATAR
4 AVATAR	4 AVATAR
5 AVATAR	5 TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON
6 NINJA ASSASSIN	6 NINJA ASSASSIN
7 TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	7 INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS
	8 AVATAR

metro east

novaliches

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3 NINJA ASSASSIN	3 AVATAR
4 TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	4 INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

forum robinsons

north edsa

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mall of asia

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north east

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pampanga

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city san lazaro

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city sta. mesa

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marikina

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city marikina

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valenzuela

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city bicutan

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luzon

city dumaguete

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city lipa

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city lucena

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city clark

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city batangas

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city naga

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city legazpi

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city sta. rosa

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city cabanatuan

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city olongapo

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city baliwag

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city malolos

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city urdaneta

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city laoag

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city vigan

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city baguio

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city dagupan

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city san carlos

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city alaminos

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visayas • mindanao

city dagas

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city iloilo

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cagayan de oro

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bacolod

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city iligan

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city zamboanga

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city cdo

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city gensan

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city butuan

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city butuan

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manila

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forum robinsons

sta. rosa

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angeles

tacloban

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ilocos norte (now open!)

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3 A CHRISTMAS CAROL	8 NINJA ASSASSIN
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Pretty actress a no-show in veteran star's festival entry

By the Entertainment staff

PRETTY ACTRESS WAS handpicked for a pivotal role in a big movie—an entry in this month's Metro Manila Film Festival.

The contract has already been sent and the production was all set to shoot. On the first day of work, PA didn't show up. The contract remained unsigned. No explanations were offered. PA just backed out, leaving the film of veteran star, a beloved industry icon, hanging.

The producers scrambled for a last-minute replacement and, fortunately, found a more professional actress, and a means.

To think PA and 95 are both Kapuso.

Most campy one-liner

Probably the most campy line in this year's MMFF is the one delivered by gay comic John Lapus in the "Glory Days" episode of "Shake, Rattle & Roll XI."

While being attended by a tuxedo-wearing diva, a bloody but defiant Lapus shrieked: "Fashion designer ako, gusto ko lang!"

A bizarre sight to behold: glamorous Bella Guthrie bewitching a chainsaw in the same episode of the horror franchise?

Berg's 'ladies'

After working with his Colombo and Rhian Ramos on "Sang Pamilya," Iyan Berg Bertillo is eyeing other youthful bruising ladies for future projects, like Marian Rivera, among current Kapuso stars. And ABS-CBN's Anne Curtis, who appeared as a guest in "Ang Iyan Day."

Willie's fan

Director Eric Quizon is grateful to Willie Revillame who did a cameo in Quizon's dad: Dolphy's MMFF entry "Nobody, Nobody But ... Juan."

Willie's TV show "Wowowee" figures prominently in the plot. A US-based old-timer (Dolphy) yearns to come home and watch the ABS-CBN game show live. Willie didn't charge a single centavo, Quizon said. "He joked that we probably couldn't afford his talent fee, anyway."

Exactly what did Willie have in mind? "It was helicopter," Quizon quipped.

ABS-CBN also wanted the fee for the TV rerunning rights to the game show said Quizon. All for the love of the King of Comedy.

ADIK Willie's cameo in Dolphy movie, Cutie's stopper at working. (Kimbing.)

Another MMFF cameo

Guess who made another surprise cameo—in "Shake, Rattle & Roll XI"?

TV host Paula Bruliaren was cast as a news anchor in the "Shuttle" episode. Is this in preparation for his possible new role in TV5, where he transferred to re-unite?

Act of upstaging others

Sometimes Iyan just earned another title, the Queen of Supaw.

KS incurred the ire of colleagues when she guested on a variety show recently. She had the gall to upstage the show's younger hosts—blushing away and refusing to let others get a word in edgewise.

Perhaps KS was under the illusion that she still headed the show. Funny thing is, when KS left the program, no one missed her, said an industry insider. Ouch!

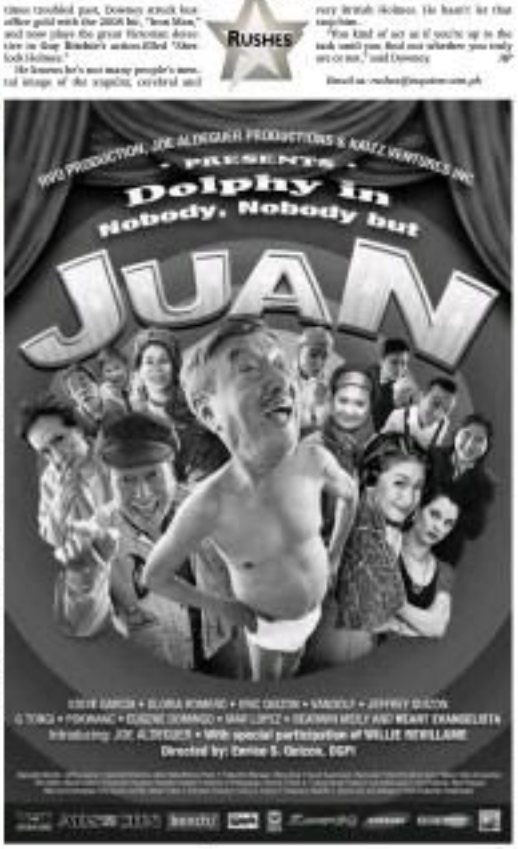
From superhero to super-sleuth

LONDON—Robert Downey Jr. is an actor at the top of his game—already a top-screen superhero, now an iconic super-sleuth.

He's also surprisingly open about his self-doubt.

A charismatic performer with a some-

RUSHES



First-class all the way for Yaya

From page B6

Shawn could convince her to appear in a commercial.

Yaya eventually started in three TV commercials, according to Sandra Chavez, Mega's business manager.

After the four-day wake at Santuario, a funeral in Heritage Memorial Park in Taguig City is set today.

Heritage, also famous as a commercial park for celebrities, is where actress Rudy Fernandez is buried.

It's first-class all the way for Yaya Luring.

KC at Her makeup. Other stars were Claire Batia, Helen Gamboa and Arnell Ignacio.

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IZA Calzado

Celebs' fondest . . .

From page B6

to another for Noche Buena but it proved that we were on our way to start a family we could call our very own."

CHRISTIAN BAUTISTA: "When my final post Tondos once to me and my brothers. We broke it before Christmas was over. But it was so much fun."

RAMON GEORGE: "When our home burned down in 2004 and 2006, we lost everything, but surprisingly, bus po we sing Pasko namin. I was amazed that it was our happiest Christmas. Kahit di kumpleto ang pamilya namin, we were still having parties at nag-nag-kwentuhan."

SUZI ENTRADA-ABRERA: "When I waited for as long as I could for Sabay. My tatlong and I own took turns waiting. But we all fell asleep and when we woke up, there were many gifts under the tree!"

JEE MADELA: "Last year when I celebrated Christmas for the first time with the elders from Asilo de Iloilo. Together with my family, we organized a simple party and gift-giving for them. Seeing the elders' smiles and listening their laughter is priceless!"

IZA CALZADO: "When I was about 6 or 7 years old, my parents told me I wasn't going to get a Christmas gift. But when the 25th came, they gave me a Sky Violet (from the "Rainbow Brite" cartoon) doll."

* * *

Nang Sunday" is GMA Films and Jesus Productions' official entry to the 2009 Metro Manila Film Festival. Bang Revilla portrays the lead role (Flavio) again. Will he outdo himself in his sob version of the Flavio dance?

Based on the trailer, wala kayong makapantay sa Sunday!

* * *

Cristine Reyes considers it a dream come true to be Vic Sotto's leading lady in OctoArts Films and APT Entertainment's entry to the '09 MMFF, "Ang Tanging Ilang Awang."

But she's quick to douse speculations that Vic would figure in her own version of Cinderella. "Considered na ako sa mga awra and he's the best advisor I've had especially on love."

The movie is a surefire hit considering Vic's impressive track record at the MMFF box office. Six seven straight years, all his movies were the highest-grossing. So, guess, "Ang Tanging Ilang Awang" is not a spin-off of "Twilight" but it might make viewers fall in love with the character at first bite and sight.

E-mail: marongbalaburg@yahoo.com

A Meryl move . . .

From page B1

was in Mano Po 2, 4 and now 6. I think I'll also be in 7, 8 and 9."

Her partner, comedy king Dolphy, also has a Mexico, Manila Pilot Festival entry (last year "Nobody, Nobody but . . . Jose"), but there's no "box-office war" looming on the horizon from "I told him about Mano Po 6/ before signing on. He didn't mind; he also loves Sharon," said Zaldua.

In the movie, Zaldua and Sharon are barely electrocuted by her time they shared the screen as romantic rivals in "Madrasta" 11 years ago, Zaldua said, "We were very civil. In the movie, we torpedoes, cat-nabon at sabotahe."

She said she's always been in awe of Sharon: "I used to watch her shows in the 1980s. Around adolescent she delivered a two-page monologue. Showing Mano Po 6," the veteran actress applauded her confrontation scene with Heart (Evangelista). Now I understand why she's paid the big bucks!"

Gabby hopeful . . .

From page C1

"Working on the film was physically draining," Gabby told the buyanos. "I'm glad the two (shows) we had served as my training ground. They helped get my groove back."

What do you think is this film's toughest challenge?

The kissing scenes with Angelica were the hardest to shoot.

What convinced you that this is the perfect comeback film?

It's a combination of many ingredients. First, the story, which is 60 percent for me. Also playing a big part is the direction. It also helped that the actors I worked with were all good. Showbiz sila.

Laurice's husband Johnny Delgado passed away while she was making this movie. Did that affect her?

She came to work the day after Johnny was buried. I suppose she felt better, knowing her loved one was no longer in pain.

How is Christmas different without your dad? (Bella Concepcion died in September 2008.)

This is our second Christmas without Dad. This year, our whole family—including my sisters and my mom—will spend the holidays in California.

Your ABS-CBN bosses announced that you'll be doing a movie with your daughter KC. What is it about? Is there any way for mom, Sharon, to add in a cameo?

We're still in preliminary discussions about the story. We haven't talked about whether Sharon could have a part in the film, although I hope she will.

ComicRelief

comicrelief.news@inquirer.com.ph

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN

BY JOS ABRERA

PUGAD BABOY

BY PAUL JUNIOR

DICK TRACY

LOVE HOTS

BY ELIZABETH HONGALD

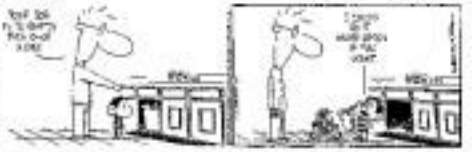
JAMES BOND

EWINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PASALIKAS

BABY BLUES

BY JERRI SCOTT



TULDOK

BY MARA COLL

BEH

BY DANIEL SHELTON

ATOMO ANG INSIDE

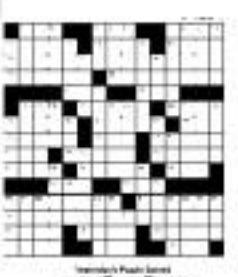
BY LYN GARCELLANO

HOROSCOPE

KOKO MACHINE

BY MANOLO ABERIA

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	1	2	7	6	3	4	8	5
7	3	8	9	5	4	6	1	2
4	5	6	2	1	8	3	9	7
6	7	9	4	8	2	5	3	1
1	2	4	5	3	6	9	7	8
5	8	3	1	7	9	2	6	4
8	6	1	3	4	5	7	2	9
2	4	7	6	9	1	8	5	3
3	9	5	8	2	7	1	4	6

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(We're running this guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema treat. The 10th MMFF runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2010.)

Ang Darling Kong Aswang

Directed by Tony Reyes; stars Ai Ai Sotto, Cristine Reyes, Agot Isidro, Jean Garcia, Mika dela Cruz, Bar-bie Forteza, Rafael Rosell, Ryan Sotto, Bernie Lizardi, Empress Schuck, Allan K., Dante Rivero, Richie D' Horsie, Jenine Gutierrez, Luz Fernandez, Jenny Miller, Wally Bayola, Tito Sotto, Vic Sotto, Mommy and Daddy; Produced by APT Entertainment, Mother Productions and Octobers Films

Elsa (Reyes) is connected to many Aswangs (Rosell), a member of the Black Aswang coven. She escapes and free in the city, where she meets Victor (Ian Ira), a widower with two daughters (Horsie and Cielo Grace).

Victor tends as a caffeverter nun, apt. Many girls falls for him, but he keeps his distance. Things change when he falls in love with Elsa. The lives of Victor and his family are put at risk when Joaquin's coven decides to hunt down Elsa and kill those she loves.

"Elsa is a collaboration of three production outfits. We've been wanting to do this project for a long time," said Sotto of his latest horror-comedy flick.

First-class all the way for Yaya

Stars mourn loss of Mega's beloved nanny

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE wake for her beloved nanny, Yaya Luring, at Our Saint-nette in San Antonio in Forbes Park on Sunday, Sharon Cuneta was spotted sifting through old photographs.

She noticed Yaya Luring's snapshot in Martha's Vineyard. Also the one where the nanny shared a limousine ride with friends.

Later, Sharon—"Mega" to friends—searched computer files, again for old photographs.

Sharon personally took charge of the arrangements at memorials, with the help of at her friends.

She skipped the premiere of her latest movie, "Mano Po 6: A Mother's Love" that same night, so she could attend to the visitors at the wake, among them ABS-CBN's Johnny Manahan and Mariole Alberto, Unilab Tony Chota, singer Mark Bautista, production designer Manny Morla and Jimmy Cobrado, brother-in-law Anthony Pangilinan and wife Maricel Laxa, and former leading man Richard Gomez.

Sharon's firstborn, Sen. Frisco Pangilinan, and daughter KC Concepcion attended the premiere in her stead. The senator read Sharon's message, in which she dedicated the movie to Yaya Luring, her faithful companion/chaperone for 40 years.

As celebrity-nanny Yaya Luring, or Lorena Bonifacio, was a fixture in Mega's outings, shootings, travel-ings and sonsorts. She was always with her employer, ready with a lovely smile.

SHARON attends to guests at Yaya's wake.

RICHARD Gomez and Sen. Francis Pangilinan

Yaya's youngest sister, Nena Asuncion—of those who were at the wake, told the Inquirer that her "blessing" was "mahal."

Asuncion recalled that even in her later years, Yaya Luring—who started here nursed Kc on Jan. 13—insisted on visiting relatives in their busy hours, commuting on her own from Mandaluyong to Makati.

"Yaya would never take go-kus and Sharon would get upset, sometimes reminded, but the stubborn octogenarian would have it no other way. She thought nothing of riding buses and jeepneys, though on her travels with Mega, she'd often fly business class and stay in five star hotels, like the Mandarin Antonia in New York.

Her Tita reminded the housemates, said. If look come time before

FIRST CLASS, 10

Celebs' fondest Christmas memories

THOUGHTS OF CHRISTMAS NEVER FAIL to rush me day around. Who doesn't love the Yuletide season? Never mind if it makes us wish that our net earnings would match our gross. Christ me spending.

I asked some celebs to share their fondest Christmas memory. May you all have priceless memories of the season to see you through the ridiculo-mus mood.

CESAR MONTANO: "I was 29 years old and staying in my hometown in Bachoco. After the Christmas Eve Mass, people went home and the streets were empty. My cousins and I felt so alone. We had no money to bohol, the pump is on the 12th. Then, midnight one night, may caroling kami at sila ang nagginaw. Sila nanood a lot of money so we partied till 6 a.m.

DENGGOOG DANTES: "It was there Christmas when I still believed in Santa Claus. I would always look forward to the gift giving ceremony on Christmas Eve when Santa would really be there. It meant coz he was just a usual American with a white beard and wore long white hats."

JOHN ESTRADA: "When my mom gave me my first bike. I ate-cacti forget Christmas of 1990. I assume that's when Tita Douglas discovered me and it was my first year to 'withdraw' calves."

MARICEL LAXA-PANGILINAN: "For Kc Christmas as newlyweds 20 years ago. Antony and I spent it together. It was quite unusual not to be hopping from one family

CELEBS', 9

Dolly Anne Carvajal

MARICEL LAXA-Pangilinan

SHARON Cuneta

MTRCB GP GENERAL PATRONAGE
MALL SHOWS December 27 SM North Edsa 4pm December 30 Glorietta 5pm
SHAKE RATTLE & R 11
OPENS DECEMBER 25

MTRCB GP GENERAL PATRONAGE
MALL SHOWS December 27 SM North Edsa 4pm December 30 Glorietta 5pm
SHARON CUNETA
MANO PO
A MOTHER'S LOVE
OPENS DECEMBER 25

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Name that 'Glee' tune

THE MOONLY High Glee Club, New Directions, sing their hearts out while dealing with high school pressures, young love and self-identity issues in "Glee" on FTC.

As the gang sings their way to the nationals, a problem arises when Mckinley High's rejoicer Cheerios coach Sue Sylvester spills performance secrets to other competing schools.

The show's King A. Glee points given to cluster prizes to 40 viewers. Who the name the title of the featured song of the week. To answer, participants may log on to streamers.com.ph.

"Glee" airs Tuesdays at 10 p.m. with replays on Sundays at 4 p.m.

F4 fever

"Boys Over Flowers: One More Time" reunite with the rich and famous boys of F4 weeknights on ABS-CBN after "Pinoy Big Brother: Double Up."

The Taiwanese series stars Lee Min-ho, Kim Hyun-Joong, Kim Bum, Kim Joon and Koo Hye Sun.